



## Report

# Evaluating changes in literacy and social connectedness as a result of Storybook Dads programme

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Jacqueline Radwan and Lee Smith

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## Ahakoia he iti he pounamu

*Although it is small, it is greenstone*  
Even small gestures can carry a lot of value<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.warriorsteambuilding.com/blog/maori-proverbs/>

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## Executive summary

Literacy levels among New Zealand prisoners are significantly lower than those of the general population. For many, literacy and numeracy training will be a fundamental part of moving towards sustainable post-release employment.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, although further research is required, it is known that imprisonment significantly and negatively impacts the relationship between a father and his children. As strong family ties reduce the risk of recidivism,<sup>3</sup> a way to maintain connection with whānau while incarcerated and after release is seen as imperative for successful reintegration.

This report provides an evaluation of the Storybook Dads programme offered to prisoners with children that is delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility, Milton, Otago, by Methodist Mission Southern. The Otago Corrections Facility, with capacity for 485 prisoners, accommodates low- to medium-high-risk male offenders.<sup>4</sup>

Storybook Dads is a literacy programme that aims to develop new skills and knowledge, reconnect with prisoners their whānau, build the relationship between father and child, and encourage literacy in the whole family. At the end of the programme a DVD of the father reading a book/s along with a hard copy of the book/s read, a card, and a workbook created by the men are sent to the child/ren.

The programme is based on the model that began at HM Prison Dartmoor, Devon, in 2002 and is now used in over 100 prisons in the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> It has been delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility by The Mission since 2007.

Storybook Dads<sup>6</sup> runs for a total of 20 hours and is delivered over six weeks in ten 2-hour sessions by two tutors. There are two variants of the Storybook Dads Programme available: the 'standard' version and a Kaupapa Māori Programme. The Kaupapa Māori Programme, which began in late 2010, is delivered in partnership with A3 Kaitiaki Limited, a subsidiary company of Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou.

### **Ehara taku toa, he taki tahi, he toa taki tini**

*My success should not be bestowed on me alone, as it was not individual success but success of a collective.*

Success usually comes with the support of others.<sup>7</sup>

Data collected for this report come from interviews conducted with 19 prisoners who took part in three Storybook Dads programmes in 2011 and 2012 and in one Kaupapa Māori Storybook Dads programme in 2011. It should be noted that information on the prisoner's ethnicity, age, marital status, child's gender, and other demographic information is not reported due to the possibility of identification. Interviews were also conducted with ten primary caregivers and prisoner's family/whānau, two prisoner's children, eight Corrections staff, and three Methodist Mission Southern staff members involved in the delivery of, or overall responsibility for, the programme.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Corrections (2009). *Prisoners Skills and Employment Strategy 2009–2012*. Wellington: Department of Corrections.

<sup>3</sup> The Basic Skills Agency. *Family Literacy and Numeracy in Prisons*, undated, [http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/projects/Family/Niace\\_research/Niace-Family-Literacy-and-Numeracy-in-Prisons.pdf](http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/projects/Family/Niace_research/Niace-Family-Literacy-and-Numeracy-in-Prisons.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.corrections.govt.nz/>

<sup>5</sup> Storybook Dads UK, About Us <http://www.storybookdads.org.uk/page120.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Where the term Storybook Dads is used, it is the model at the Otago Corrections Facility that is referred to.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.maori.cl/Proverbs.htm>

## Findings

Results show that Storybook Dads can produce gains in participant's literacy development in a very short time and the programme positively affects relationships. In addition, children are motivated to learn and the men involved think more positively about themselves and their roles as fathers.

All prisoners expressed value in Storybook Dads and more than half (53%, n=10) reported that their participation in Storybook Dads had fostered their child's literacy development. Six (60%) primary caregivers and family/whānau members also thought that a father's participation in Storybook Dads had improved his child's literacy.

At the same time as Storybook Dads was being delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility a second literacy programme was being delivered there by Workforce Development. This made it difficult to accurately assess prisoners' literacy development from Storybook Dads only as eight of 20 prisoners participated in both programmes. We measured participant literacy development in both programmes after 20 hours, which is not ideal. Storybook Dads is a 20-hour programme and literacy is measured every 32 hours during the Corrections programme. In some cases multiple assessments were carried out throughout the Corrections programme; however, for consistency only the first and second assessments covering the first 32 hours were used to measure change. Consequently, participants who were part of both the Corrections literacy programme and Storybook Dads might have continued to develop their literacy in either programme, although this cannot be determined. Our findings of the Storybook Dads participants showed an average increase in literacy development of 0.59 steps when measured against the Read with Understanding strand of the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission's (2008) *Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy Handbook*.<sup>8</sup> Although participants in both programmes gained slightly more literacy steps, with an average of 0.63, this was not significant.

More than half (58%, n=11) the prisoners reported that their relationships were better or much better with their child, and other family/whānau members (63%, n=12) as a consequence of their participation in Storybook Dads. When asked about the relationship with their child's mother, most (63%, n=12) said there was no change or they didn't know; however, 37% (n=7) said their participation had made the relationship better or much better. Six (60%) primary caregivers and family/whānau also reported that the father's participation in Storybook Dads had improved his relationship with his child. However, less than half (40%, n=4) of that group reported that it had a positive impact on their own relationship with the father. Corrections and Methodist Mission staff commented on how participation in Storybook Dads had a positive impact on prisoners' self-esteem, behaviour in prison, and relationships with other people. This means the second aim of Storybook Dads programme – to enhance, foster, and strengthen relationships – can be considered to have been met.

Comments from prisoners highlighted how much they enjoyed participating in Storybook Dads and that they specifically took part because they wanted to do something for their child. They also took care in what they produced and experienced enjoyment making something for their child and that their child enjoyed it. Some family/whānau, as well as Corrections and Methodist Mission staff, stated that the prisoners' participation in Storybook Dads allowed them to see a gentler side of the prisoner, a contrast to the hard exterior normally portrayed to others.

Qualitative data show how the group environment of Storybook Dad promotes trust, cooperation, and collaboration between participants and Methodist Mission tutors, as well as among the men themselves. This supportive group environment allows participants to discuss parenting concerns and their affection for their child/ren without risk of censure.

### **Tangata ako ana i te whare, te turanga ki te marae, tau ana**

*A person who is taught at home, will stand collected on the marae (meeting house grounds).<sup>9</sup>*

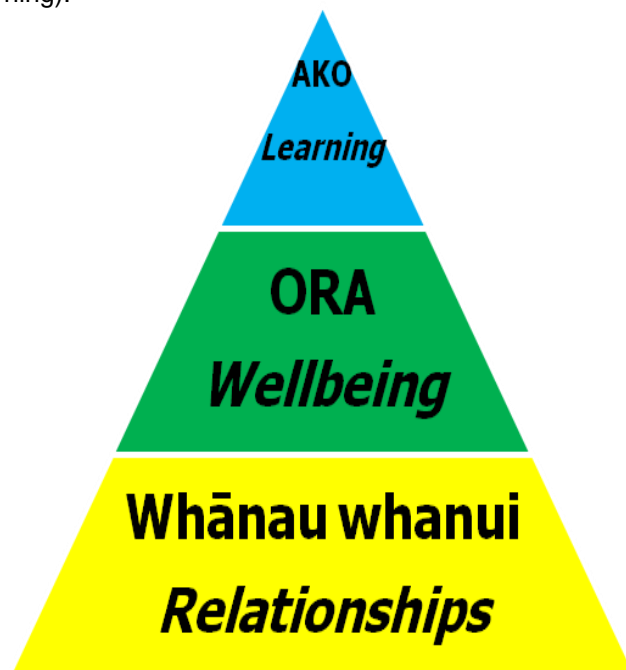
A child who is given proper values at home and cherished within his family, will not only behave well among the family but also within society and throughout his life.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tec.govt.nz>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.maori.cl/Proverbs.htm>

## Conclusions

Three main overlapping themes were identified from the findings: Whānau whānui (relationships), Ora (wellbeing), and Ako (learning).



This research demonstrates that the ability to provide something for their children and to positively influence their children's learning and improve their relationship are participants' major motivators. Additionally, the men who take part in Storybook Dads are able to display more positive behaviour both during and after the course. The positive behaviour displayed during Storybook Dads persists beyond the classroom: there is a desire to continue and to improve relationships. Storybook Dads encourages pride in self, children, and whānau.

Social and life skills are also developed, with positive changes in the attitudes of the participants. The men are enthusiastic about and enjoy the programme and their confidence grows as their abilities increase. A change of thinking seems to take place during the programme – men begin to think of themselves and each other as fathers rather than prisoners. Storybook Dads provides the men with a rare opportunity to be a father within the confines of a prison and improve their relationships with their children and family/whānau, which are integral to their successful reintegration into their community and society.

Storybook Dads encourages and supports participants to improve their literacy skills and to build and develop relationships with tamariki (children), whānau, and others. The participant's focus is on the needs of their children and they are motivated to improve their literacy to provide the best possible experience for the recipients. Throughout the programme men are conscious of how they want to appear to their children on the DVD. They are proud, reflective of and motivated by what they produce.

The Kaupapa Māori Programme validates the culture of the participants, allowing the men to celebrate and share their values and beliefs with their tamariki and is delivered during Matariki, which celebrates the Māori New Year.

### **Toi tu te kupu, toi tu te mana, toi tu te whenua**

This proverb was spoken by Tinirau of Wanganui. It is a plea to hold fast to our culture, for without language, without mana (spirit), and without land, the essence of being Māori would no longer exist, but be a skeleton that would not provide weight for the full body of Māoritanga (Māoridom).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.maori.cl/Proverbs.htm>



Literacy gains are made in a short timeframe and in a variety of ways. The men do not just produce written work – they have to present their work to their children via DVD. Oral delivery and personal presentation skills are polished in the process of being videotaped.

The learning takes place in a context that is of relevance to and affects the men directly. They recognise the importance of literacy to their children's lives and want to encourage them to be successful learners. The men are genuinely engaged with and excited by learning in this context.

Storybook Dads provides a creative learning environment centered on the men being able to communicate age-appropriate information to their children. The programme allows for meaningful discussion in a supportive group dynamic in which the men feel a sense of belonging. This promotes and supports their ability to communicate ideas effectively using appropriate technology, literacy, and language. The tutors are an essential element of the learning environment, as their role allows them to act as mentors and facilitators of learning for the men.

Learning for the participants is not just related to reading and writing. Important gains also appear in the development of active learning skills, such as practice, preparation, planning, effort, and reflection. The men support and learn from each other through the programme and show creativity in what they produce. Learning is enhanced when effort such as this is made and learners feel supported to take risks.

## Recommendations

1. The development and adaptation of other programmes that:
  - a. can use the idea of improving relationships as a fundamental element
  - b. contain activities that include the participant's children either in person or by distance; for example, children and whānau visits for story selection and reading, or shared story writing
2. The development of variations and extensions to the programme, such as:
  - a. programme expansion to other sites (e.g. women's prisons)
  - b. a Pasifika programme
  - c. drama-focused programmes where the men write their own scripts, which could potentially even include a performance to which children and whānau are invited
3. Establishment of an adequate, appropriate, long-term funding model for the programme.
4. Further research into the following areas:
  - a. How and why the prison environment produces literacy gains above levels suggested in other research?
  - b. Post-release investigations of the programme participants in order to examine:
    - i. long-term literacy gains
    - ii. rates of re-offending
    - iii. relationship maintenance with children, whānau, and others
  - c. The child's literacy development after receiving the DVD and book made by their father.
  - d. Comparison between Storybook Dads programme delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility with variations delivered at other sites
  - e. Comparison of literacy scores between prisoners who participated only in the Department of Corrections literacy programme and prisoners who participated in both that programme and Storybook Dads in order to fully establish and examine the cause of the identified literacy gains

*Literacy should not be held up as a panacea for crime prevention and reduction. It would be more productive to recognize literacy as one of a range of tools that should be implemented to effectively rehabilitate... There are a myriad of factors that result in an individual being imprisoned and unless an holistic approach that tackles all these factors is used then a true difference cannot be made.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Clark C. & Dugdale, G. (November 2008). *Literacy changes lives. The role of literacy in offending behavior, a discussion piece*. London: National Literacy Trust.

# Introduction

## He waka eke noa

*A canoe which we are all in with no exception*  
We are all in this together.<sup>12</sup>

## Literacy

*"Literacy has tangible relationships with many aspects of a person's life not just educational achievement but also economic well-being, aspirations, family circumstances physical and mental health as well as civic/cultural population."*<sup>13</sup>

Literacy levels among New Zealand prisoners are significantly lower compared to the general population.<sup>14</sup> Department of Corrections (2009) screening for literacy and numeracy skills shows that up to 90% of prisoners have literacy skills below those needed to fully participate in society and obtain post-release employment. People with low educational success are more likely to commit crimes and be imprisoned than are people who have succeeded in school and the education system. Although there is no clear evidence why this is the case, Gordon (2009, 2010, 2011) maintains that educational success can enhance self-esteem and lead to greater employment opportunities with higher wages, which act as protective factors against offending.

Data collected by The Methodist Mission at the Otago Corrections Facility consistently shows that at the start of their Storybook Dads programme, 80% of the men are at or below Step Three of the decoding, vocabulary, and language and text features progressions of the Read with Understanding strand from the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy handbook 2008.<sup>15</sup> This handbook defines an individual strand as made of several learning progressions, while a progression is defined as a continuous set of steps along a range. The steps describe each stage of development in the learning process along each progression. Table 1 shows Step Three from the measured strands.<sup>16</sup> Each description illustrates what an individual should be capable of to be considered to be at a Step Three progression.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.maori.cl/Proverbs.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Clark C. & Dugdale, G. (November 2008). *Literacy changes Lives. The role of literacy in offending behavior, a discussion piece*. London. National Literacy Trust.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Corrections, 2009

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Documents/Publications/Learning-progressions-literacy.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Documents/Publications/Learning-progressions-literacy.pdf>



**Table 1: Step Three Progressions from the measured literacy strands**

<b>Decoding progression</b>	<b>Vocabulary progression</b>	<b>Language and text features progression</b>
Most adults will be able to:	Most adults will be able to:	Most adults will be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use more complex, reliable strategies for decoding most everyday words with fluency and accuracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have a reading vocabulary of everyday words and some less common words, acronyms, and abbreviations</li> <li>understand that some words and phrases can have figurative as well as literal meanings</li> <li>have strategies for finding the meanings of unknown words, including a knowledge of how to find words in a dictionary and interpret definitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand a variety of sentence structures and paragraph structures within more complex texts</li> <li>be aware of how clauses can be combined and marked with commas, semicolons or colons within complex sentences</li> <li>understand how simple clauses can be elaborated by adding words and phrases</li> <li>recognise the features and structures of a wider range of text types</li> <li>recognise a range of visual text forms that can be combined with or included in written texts</li> </ul>

There is limited published research on the educational programmes run in New Zealand prisons or the effects of imprisonment on children and other family members. In stating this however, Gordon (2009, 2010) and Gordon and MacGibbon (2011) have undertaken research on prisoners, and the resulting reports include specific information on prisoner's educational levels and the effect their incarceration has on their children's education and well-being. It should be noted that the Gordon and MacGibbon (2011) report specifically focused on Māori prisoners; however, the ethnicity of prisoners is not a focus of this Storybook Dads report (also see Department of Corrections, 2007; Fergusson, 1993; Fergusson, Horwood & Swain-Campbell, 2003, for further data reporting statistics on the ethnicity of New Zealand prisoners).

Improving prisoners' literacy has been shown to have a number of important benefits. In particular, literacy programmes that involve parents in prison reading to their children enhance personal and skill development, strengthen familial relationships, and help reduce recidivism.<sup>17</sup>

Research into effective adult literacy, numeracy, and language teaching concluded a range of factors appeared likely to enhance learner gain. These factors include skilled tutors able to identify the level of ability of the learner and employ appropriate teaching strategies and a strength-based approach, continuous evaluation and assessment, individualized and flexible teaching methods and curriculum, high levels of participation by the learner, and a focus on continuing development.<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly, efforts are made to relate these factors specifically to the Storybook Dads programme. First, the tutors in the Storybook Dads programme are appropriately skilled – both were Foundation Skills tutors, one specialising in literacy, the other in information technology. These tutors are supported by other literacy specialist peers, including a Practice Leader, and have an opportunity to up-skill through continual professional development.

Second, Storybook Dads provides a highly contextualised and authentic learning environment as it is an embedded literacy programme that focuses on one of (if not the) most important things in the participants' lives – their children. Literacy is a social practice, not merely a technical skill.<sup>19</sup> Literacy practice contextualises literacy itself for the prisoners. While there are very few genuine ways to do this in the prison, Storybook Dads provides a powerful context for literacy delivery.

<sup>17</sup> Storybook Dads (2008). Annual Report 2008. Plymouth, Devon, UK: Storybook Dads.

<sup>18</sup> Bensemen, J., Sutton, A., & Lander, J. (2005). Working in the light of evidence, as well as aspiration a literature review of the best available evidence about effective adult literacy, numeracy and language teaching. Retrieved February 23, 2013, from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary\\_education/27773/5727](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary_education/27773/5727)

<sup>19</sup> Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). The psychology of literacy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Furthermore, the level of participation and attendance of each of the men within the programme is very high, as the involvement of their children is a powerful motivator. The programme is 20 hours long, which is considerably less than the 100 hours thought necessary for progress by Bensemen et al. (2005). However, it does have a high level of intensity and regularity, which Bensemen et al. recognize as important.

Learning is a social activity – Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development<sup>20</sup> underpins the Storybook Dads programme, where the tutors and the slightly more capable peers provide the scaffolding for the prisoners to construct and practise their knowledge and skills in the literacy development. The prisoners continue to practise and support each other between programme sessions.

Finally, families are the main context for learning for most people. Learning within the family is usually more lasting and influential than any other method of learning, and family life provides a foundation and context for all learning.<sup>21</sup> The involvement of fathers has been shown to increase the engagement in and improvement of both children's and fathers' literacy and learning.<sup>22</sup>

## The role of fathers and families in a child's literacy development

Family/whanau is an important context for all young people's learning.<sup>23</sup> The majority of children accrue social skills, appropriate ways of behaving and speaking in the home.<sup>24</sup> When it comes to a child's education and their ability to read and write, parental education levels and financial status are likely to impact on the child's educational achievement.<sup>25</sup> For instance, if parents have poor literacy skills and low social economic status then they are less likely to buy and value books and other items, which are necessary for a child's education.<sup>26</sup> Parents with poor literacy may also be unable to help their child with homework, which in turn may put their child at a disadvantage when it comes to their schooling. As prisoners are more likely to have low levels of literacy and low socio-economic status compared with the general population, their children are 'at risk' of underachieving.<sup>27</sup>

If fathers are involved in their children's learning this can improve the children's literacy development – and in some cases, the father's.<sup>28</sup> When fathers are incarcerated, however, they are unable to help with their children's homework or read to them (Gordon, 2009). The Storybook Dads programme provides an opportunity for fathers at the Otago Correctional Facility to help their children's literacy learning, and – if they also have poor literacy skills – to develop their own reading and writing. The programme also aims to strengthen the relationship between father and child as well as the prisoner's relationships with other members of their family/whānau.

## Family relationships of prisoners

Gordon (2009; 2010) conducted a 2-year study with 137 prisoners from four prisons. All 137 volunteers completed surveys and 46 agreed to take part in a follow-up interview. Of the 137 survey participants, 98 stated they were a parent (87% of female participants; and 65% of males) and there was an average of 2.2 children per prisoner. Gordon and MacGibbon (2011) found that of the 217 participants in their study 161 were parents (74%), with an average of 2.5 children per prisoner. Consequently, when parents are imprisoned numerous children are affected.

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<sup>20</sup> Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>21</sup> The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (1999). *NIACE Briefing Sheet 5 Family Learning*. Retrieved February 23, 2013, from [http://www.niace.org.uk/Information/Briefing\\_sheets/Family\\_Learning.pdf](http://www.niace.org.uk/Information/Briefing_sheets/Family_Learning.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Clark, C. (June 2009) *Why fathers matter to their children's literacy*. London: National Literacy Trust. P. 1.

<sup>23</sup> NIACE, 1999

<sup>24</sup> Bourdieu, 1986

<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, 1986; Thrupp, 2006

<sup>26</sup> Bourdieu, 1986

<sup>27</sup> see Department of Corrections, 2009; Fergusson, Swain-Campbell & Norwood, 2004; Ruckledge, McLean & Bateup, 2009

<sup>28</sup> Clark, 2009

When a parent is incarcerated a child's relationship with this parent is likely to change. In some cases a child lives with the remaining parent, others live with grandparent/s, aunties or extended family/whānau.<sup>29</sup> Others are cared for by foster parents or go into the care of Children Youth and Family (CYF), which can be traumatising for a child.<sup>30</sup> International research highlights how having one or both parents in prison can have devastating effects on a child's health, their well-being and social skills.<sup>31</sup> Some of these effects include bedwetting, eczema, anxiety, low self-esteem, internalised shame, and social withdrawal or alternatively, violence and acting out.<sup>32</sup> In some cases children's behaviour and achievement at school deteriorates.<sup>33</sup> For instance some may lose interest in school and in some cases children may be subjected to bullying or become bullies themselves.<sup>34</sup> Because of the detrimental impact of parental imprisonment on their child/ren some United States prisons have introduced special units for mothers with children to continue to foster that relationship.<sup>35</sup>

After a parent is imprisoned some children are relocated to areas away from their imprisoned parent, while parents may also be imprisoned some distance from their children.<sup>36</sup> Less than half of the 137 prisoners in Gordon's (2010) study lived within an hour's drive of their children. Due to the considerable expense and time necessary to travel to prisons a child may be unable to visit their parent/s or may only do so occasionally.<sup>37</sup>

Relationships between parents can deteriorate after incarceration, which in some cases makes it difficult for fathers to see their child.<sup>38</sup> Families are also likely to experience financial, emotional, and social hardships as a result of the incarceration of a parent, which makes maintaining strong, positive family connections difficult.<sup>39</sup> For instance, there are instances where the person imprisoned may be the sole wage earner in the household, which means the other parent may have to rely on welfare to support the family.<sup>40</sup> In some incidences children may also engage in criminal activity because of their new found poverty.<sup>41</sup>

In prisons themselves, Gordon (2010) reports that prisoners are charged 99 cents a minute on the telephone, which is expensive and likely to reduce contact between a parent and child. Further, some children are intimidated by the formality involved in visiting their parent in prison, which is likely to impact on their desire to visit their parent and impact on their relationship with that parent.<sup>42</sup> All these reasons may explain why the majority of prisoners in New Zealand are unable to stay in "*good touch with their children and whānau through their sentence*".<sup>43</sup>

## Fathers in prison

New Zealand research on parents in prisons tends to focus on mothers' relationships with their children.<sup>44</sup> This may be because the relationship between a mother and child is socially constructed as more important to a child's development than that between a father and child. More research is needed on male prisoners' relationships with their child/ren. In stating this, however, New Zealand and international research highlights how incarceration frustrates a father's ability to be involved in his child/ren's lives in a meaningful way.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011

<sup>30</sup> Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011

<sup>31</sup> Hoffman, Byrd, Kightlinger, 2010

<sup>32</sup> Hoffman, Byrd, Kightlinger, 2010; Sheehan, 2010

<sup>33</sup> Gordon, 2011

<sup>34</sup> Gordon, 2011

<sup>35</sup> Hoffman, Byrd, & Kightlinger, 2010

<sup>36</sup> Gordon, 2009 also see Hoffmann, Byrd, & Kightlinger, 2010

<sup>37</sup> Gordon 2009; Walker, 2005

<sup>38</sup> Gordon, 2009; Arditti, Smock & Parkman, 2005

<sup>39</sup> Gordon, 2009; Heather, 1988

<sup>40</sup> Gordon, 2009

<sup>41</sup> Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Norwood, 2004

<sup>42</sup> Gordon, 2009

<sup>43</sup> Gordon, 2012, p. i

<sup>44</sup> see Kingi, 1999; Kingi, Paulin, Wehipeihana, & Mossman, 2008

<sup>45</sup> Dyer, 2005; Gordon, 2009; 2012; Gordon, & MacGibbon, 2011

Arditti, Smock and Parkman (2005) conducted research with 51 male prisoners in the United States who had one or more children. Although the majority of participants wanted to be involved in their children's lives, many explained that imprisonment was a "dormant period" (p. 267) in their role as a father, a role they would recommence on their release. The participants also reported that they felt unable to be "a good father" (p. 267) in the prison because their lives are routines and heavily regulated. As positive relationships can help reduce re-offending,<sup>46</sup> families play a significant role in a prisoner's reintegration into the community.<sup>47</sup> Prisons need to foster links between prisoners and their family/whānau (where possible and only when a prisoner is not a risk to their children/families/whānau). For this reason some prisons in the United States as well as New Zealand have begun to offer parenting courses to inmates.<sup>48</sup> Christchurch Men's Prison has introduced Close to Home, a programme designed for prisoners and their family/whānau that aims to foster the prisoner's successful reintegration into society post release.<sup>49</sup> Other prisons, such as Dartmoor Prison in England, the Otago Correctional Facility, and Hawke's Bay prison in New Zealand have introduced the Storybook Dads programme, in which fathers make their child a recording of themselves reading a book aloud.

It is clear that imprisonment interrupts fatherhood and limits the ability of fathers to be meaningfully involved in their children's lives.<sup>50</sup> As men's lives are heavily restricted, and their families face hardship and distress due to the incarceration of a family member, maintaining strong family relationships is difficult.<sup>51</sup> This can easily have a negative impact on both prisoners and families, given that meaningful relationships are linked with a reduction in re-offending,<sup>52</sup> and families can play a significant role in the reintegration of prisoners into the community.<sup>53</sup>

This ties in directly with the holistic principles underpinning adult learning,<sup>54</sup> which support learning in the context of family and children. This is due in part to the fact that adult learners draw on their previous experiences of life and learning – and learning related to an adult's social roles or applicable to real-life issues is best.

Furthermore, improving prisoners' literacy has been shown to have a number of important benefits that relate directly to the importance of relationships. In particular, literacy programmes that involve parents in prison reading to their children enhance personal and skill development, strengthen familial relationships, and help reduce recidivism.<sup>55</sup> Criminological and social research provides evidence of the factors that influence re-offending: education, employment, drug and alcohol misuse, mental and physical health, attitudes and self-control, institutionalisation and life-skills, housing, financial support and debt, and family networks.<sup>56</sup> In 2013 The Department of Corrections implemented a "combination of interventions", which included greater access to education in order to meet its 2017 target of reducing reoffending by 25%. A key element of this target is to improve the reading and writing of the approximately 71% of prisoners who have difficulty with those skills.<sup>57</sup> Storybook Dads looks to address the areas of education and family networks that are important factors in reducing recidivism. When discussing parenting programme benefits, Purvis (2013, p. 15<sup>58</sup>) notes that reduced

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.niace.org.uk>

<sup>47</sup> Gordon, 2012; Kingi, 2009

<sup>48</sup> Gordon, 2012; Arditti et al., 2005

<sup>49</sup> Gordon, 2012

<sup>50</sup> Dyer, J. (2005). *Prison, Fathers and Identity – A theory of how incarceration affects men's paternal identity*. Men's Studies Press

<sup>51</sup> Heather, D. (1988) *The social effects of imprisonment on male prisoners and their families*. Wellington: Institute of Criminology (Victoria University of Wellington)

<sup>52</sup> The Basic Skills Agency. *Family Literacy and Numeracy in Prisons*, undated, [http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/projects/Family/NIACE\\_research/NIACE-Family-Literacy-and-Numeracy-in-Prisons.pdf](http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/projects/Family/NIACE_research/NIACE-Family-Literacy-and-Numeracy-in-Prisons.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Kingi, V. (February 2009). *The forgotten victims – the effects of imprisonment on families/whānau*. Wellington: Crime and Justice Research Centre (Victoria University of Wellington).

<sup>54</sup> Knowles, M. (1990). *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* (4th Edn). Houston: Gulf Publishing.

<sup>55</sup> Department of Corrections (2009). *Prisoners Skills and Employment Strategy 2009-2012*. Wellington: Department of Corrections.

<sup>56</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (July 2002), *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*, HMG Cabinet Office

<sup>57</sup> Department of Corrections (2013). *Education, job skills, and working prisons*. Wellington: Department of Corrections.

<sup>58</sup> Purvis, M (2013). Paternal incarceration and parenting programs in prison: A review paper. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 20(1), 9–28. doi:10.1080/13218719.2011.615822

recidivism has been linked to the maintenance of parent–child relationships during periods of incarceration, and that some research<sup>59</sup> has established a link between recidivism and the strengthening of family ties.

## Connection to family and children

The report *Family Matters: The Importance of Family Support for Young People's Reading*,<sup>60</sup> shows that what parents say and do can have a significant impact on young people's reading enjoyment, confidence, and attainment. It was established that the two main factors that influence young people to read are parental encouragement to read, and parents acting as role models by reading themselves. The report ascertains that these two factors increase children's frequency, ability, and enjoyment of reading.

This is clearly reflected in the OECD Pisa report,<sup>61</sup> which states that children whose parents are more inclined to read and hold positive attitudes towards reading are better at reading than children whose parents do not share those positive attitudes. In all countries and economies assessed, the children whose parents think reading has value or who spend more time reading at home for enjoyment have significantly higher scores in reading.<sup>62</sup> Modelling is a critical part of encouraging children to read, to develop a love of reading, and to increase academic achievement.

Evaluation of family literacy programmes shows that there are many factors that increase the likelihood of participant success. First, it is important to incorporate into the programme information that the participants provide, as their individual goals may differ from each other. Correspondingly, it is then also crucial to include activities that have some relevance to the participants to provide a strong context for the work. The programme also works well when the participants are able to form a strong social network with each other. Finally, the programme is likely to be far more effective and successful when participation and evaluation are voluntary.<sup>63</sup>

To gain a broader understanding of how a successful programme functions and what the potential outcomes are, it is imperative to examine participant evaluations. One study assessed the evaluations of those who participated in the Barbara Bush Family Literacy Program, which is delivered throughout the United States. The participants' comments about the programme were overwhelmingly positive, and many echoed evaluation comments made regarding other, similar programmes. For example, participants noted that their involvement with programme planning was appreciated, as well as the incorporation of their children and families in activities as a relevant context. The participants particularly enjoyed the social networks that were created as a result of the programme. The social interaction is able to give the literacy progress further context, as well as provide a strong support network for the participants.

Interestingly, many participants also enjoyed the social aspect because it boosted their self-esteem tremendously and provided them with a support network for issues beyond literacy, for example, parenting advice. Participants further emphasised frequent progress checks and the celebration of small successes, which helped keep morale and self-esteem high. Also important were information on and assistance in continuing education and employment beyond the literacy programme, as well as support programmes that help participants continue their involvement in the literacy programme, for example, the provision of childcare or transportation services.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ditchfield, J (1994). Family ties and recidivism: Main findings of the literature. Home Office Research Bulletin, 36, 3–9.

<sup>60</sup> Clark, C & Picton, I. (2012). *Family Matters: The Importance of Family Support for Young People's Reading*. National Literacy Trust.

<sup>61</sup> OECD Building policies for better lives. PISA – Let's Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education (2012). Retrieved February 23, 2013, from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/programme-for-international-student-assessment-pisa-lets-read-them-a-story-the-parent-factor-in-education.htm>

<sup>62</sup> OECD Building policies for better lives. PISA – Let's Read Them a Story!

<sup>63</sup> Knell and Geissler (1992), as cited in <http://www.calpro-online.org/eric/docs/padak/familit4.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Neuman, S, Caperelli, B, Kee, C. (1998). *Literacy learning, a family matter*. The Reading Teacher, 52(3), Research Library, 244 p.



The theme of high success relating to high self-esteem was also very prevalent in the evaluations of the Manukau Family Literacy Programme. Increases in self-esteem were often mentioned both in a social context (in relation to making friends and reducing feelings of isolation) as well as in an educational context (learning new skills and being able to help their children with homework). The Manukau programme also specifically included a well-received and highly praised parenting course. Participants observed that as a result, their relationships with their children had improved significantly, and the combination of the family literacy element and the parenting element of the programme helped provide them with the tools and confidence to be a role model for their children.<sup>65</sup>

Family literacy programmes have been shown to provide benefits both for children and their parents/caregivers. Impressively, the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA found that after family involvement in the Kenan Family Literacy Model Program;<sup>66</sup> teachers assessed over 90% of children previously considered to be “at-risk” as being prepared to enter school without any anticipated problems.

Furthermore, once the Kenan model was adopted by the Toyota Families for Learning Program (TFLP), a study involving 500 participants showed that adult participants in family literacy programmes have higher literacy gains and are less likely to drop out than when compared to adult-focused programmes. Similarly, children in family literacy programmes also show higher literacy gains than when compared to child-focused programmes.<sup>67</sup>

We can therefore infer from the findings on family literacy programmes that these programmes provide a highly contextualised, personal, and social environment for literacy that is invaluable for participant success.

Storybook Dads aims to expand prisoners’ literacy skills and knowledge, reconnect male prisoners with their whānau, build the relationship between father and child, and encourage literacy in the whole family. Being imprisoned disconnects parents from their relationships, which hinders their ability to play a role in their children and family’s lives.<sup>68</sup> It is known from data reported on the first year of a 3-year study of the children of prisoners in New Zealand that 65% of male inmates were parents,<sup>69</sup> indicating that the number of children affected by prison is significant. The Storybook Dads programme provides the opportunity for the male prisoners to connect with their children and to be seen as positive role models.

## The Storybook Dads programme

The Otago Corrections Facility, part of Prison Services Southern Region, accommodates up to 485 low to high-medium security male prisoners, and is situated near Milton in South Otago. Since 2007, the Methodist Mission’s Storybook Dads has been offered as a literacy programme to those prisoners who have children here.<sup>70</sup> Enrolment is voluntary. Storybook Dads is underpinned by Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of social cognitive development, in which tutors and prisoners with more literacy skills support (or scaffold) their less skilled peers to develop their literacy. The purpose of the programme is to support the development of new skills and knowledge, reconnect with their whānau, build the relationship between father and child, and encourage literacy in the whole family.

The evaluated programme was 20 hours in duration, delivered over six weeks. Each learning session was two hours long, with sessions one and ten being the delivered on one, and session’s two to nine delivered as dual daily sessions with a 30-minute break between each session. Delivery was by two tutors employed by the Methodist Mission. At the completion of the 20 hours a DVD of the prisoner reading a book, a hard copy of the

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<sup>65</sup> Benseman, J. & Sutton, A. (2005). *Summative evaluation of the Manukau Family Literacy Project (2004)*. Auckland UniServices Limited, Ref: 09644.03.

<sup>66</sup> NCFL 1989.

<sup>67</sup> Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2007). *Parent and home involvement in schools*. Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>68</sup> Woodward, R. (2003) *Families of prisoners: Literature review on issues and difficulties*. Canberra, Australia. Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services

<sup>69</sup> Gordon, L. (2009). Invisible children: First year research report 'A study of the children of prisoner'. Retrieved February 23, 2013, from [http://www.pillars.org.nz/images/stories/Invisible\\_children.pdf](http://www.pillars.org.nz/images/stories/Invisible_children.pdf)  
<[http://www.pillars.org.nz/images/stories/Invisible\\_children.pdf](http://www.pillars.org.nz/images/stories/Invisible_children.pdf)>

<sup>70</sup> [http://www.corrections.govt.nz/about\\_us/getting\\_in\\_touch/our\\_locations/otago\\_corrections\\_facility.html](http://www.corrections.govt.nz/about_us/getting_in_touch/our_locations/otago_corrections_facility.html)



book, a card in which they write to their child, and a workbook, all of which were created by the prisoners are sent to their child. Since the Storybook Dads started at the Otago Corrections Facility, the children who have received these DVDs and other items have ranged between six months and 13 years, with the majority being two to five years old.

During the period reviewed there were two versions of Storybook Dads programme run at the Otago Corrections Facility: one a 'standard' version; the other a Kaupapa Māori programme delivered in partnership with A3 Kaitiaki Limited, which is a subsidiary company of Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou. In the Kaupapa Māori programme, an A3 Kaitiaki staff member provided expertise in tikanga (culture and protocol), while the Methodist Mission provided knowledge of the fundamentals of the programme, experience in delivery, and technical expertise in DVD production. The Kaupapa Māori programme began in 2010 in response to the high number of participants selecting stories and including other items with Māori content.

A number of factors have been identified as enhancing literacy development<sup>71</sup> and have been incorporated into the Mission's Storybook Dads programme. These include employing skilled, specialist foundation-level tutors who identify the learner's current abilities and adapt their teaching to match that. Tutors provide the prisoners with verbal formative feedback; support prisoners' literacy development through focusing on what the prisoners can do; and use this as a foundation for the acquisition of new learning. Both tutors undertake regular professional development in literacy and are supported by the Methodist Mission's Practice Leader who has a background in literacy and is an ex-primary school principal.

As there are limited ways to embed literacy learning in something prisoners value, Storybook Dads is presented to prisoners as something that provides them with an opportunity to make a learning resource for their child rather than as a literacy programme. By focusing on their relationship with their child, the Storybook Dads programme provides a meaningful context and a powerful motivator for prisoner participation. Further, as Storybook Dads is not fore-fronted as a literacy programme, prisoners do not have to fear a loss of status if they admit poor literacy in front of other inmates and do not need to feel ashamed if they believe their literacy has failed to improve over the course of the programme.

While Storybook Dads initially appears to be a simple programme through which prisoners have an opportunity to make a DVD for their children, participants also have the opportunity to practise and accrue other skills. These include:

- Practising and developing reading (the story and accompanying resources)
- Practising and developing written language (the creation of a card and workbook with individual messages).
- Oral language and presentation skills (prisoners need to use different voices for different characters and use pacing as well as a loud and clear voice).
- Storyboarding skills (initially mapping out how the story will be presented).
- Cooperative skills (working with other prisoners and tutors in the programme).
- Creative expression (selecting and incorporating music and sound effects into the DVD).
- Parenting skills (the opportunity to discuss children's behaviour with other parents and tutors).

When it comes to making the DVD itself, the tutors teach the men how to read aloud, create a mood (excitement/tension), an appropriate pace, and the importance of reading ahead. Prisoners are also taught about pausing when they come to punctuation and the importance of where they place the book in terms of voice projection. Participants are also taught appropriate body posture and to look into the camera in order to induce a feeling of eye contact with their child when they watch the DVD. Finally, the men are taught to point to words as they read the books to the camera so their child/ren can follow along at home.

The Department of Corrections provide a variety of programmes at the Otago Correctional Facility for prisoners to acquire education and training, including the Department's own literacy programme. As it is a voluntary programme, Storybook Dads is not part of the Corrections literacy programme or of an offender's plan, it is not delivered nationally and, until this research, its impact has not been extensively evaluated. It is not part of a prisoner's plan in the United Kingdom either.

On the surface the programme appears to be just an opportunity to make a DVD to send home to the children

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<sup>71</sup> Benseman, Sutton, & Lander, 2005.

but the programme is so designed that there are many processes through which the men have an opportunity to grow. These processes include choosing a story they think their child will like; practising reading and articulation skills through the use of different character voices and phrasing skills; storyboarding skills (setting out the story on paper the way it will be told); developing relational skills and expressing empathy and imagination through the inclusion of extras such as music, sound effects, and any special messages that personalise the experience; writing skills through the creation of a card to go with the DVD; and the opportunity to talk about parenting skills, children's behaviours, and positive modelling.

Storybook Dads includes direct teaching, which primarily targets the literacy aspect of the programme. Target skills are reading, which include character voices, phrasing, reading of punctuation, creating a mood – excitement/tension, use of repetition, pace and pausing, as well as increasing vocabulary and reading ahead. Writing skills are also included as the men create a card to go with the DVD, as well as writing personalised messages to put at the end of the story. The men also learn about how to read to children using one-to-one pointing, pointing at specific parts of pictures in the stories, talking about particular parts of the story, asking questions, and making frequent eye contact. There is also a focus on parenting skills throughout the programme, and these tend to result from indirect teaching, or teaching that happens as needed or when identified.

Begun in 2002, the programme is now used in over 100 prisons in the United Kingdom.<sup>72</sup> Since it started there, Storybook Dads has developed considerably. Men are now filmed reading the story into the camera as though they are speaking directly to their children.

## Other programmes in correctional facilities

The New Zealand Department of Corrections (DOC)<sup>73</sup> reports that educational and literacy programmes can reduce recidivist offending. Consequently, in 2013 the DOC introduced a range of educational programmes to prisons that included embedding literacy in a context in order to improve the literacy skills of the approximately 71% of prisoners who have difficulties with reading and writing. The ability to read and write can improve chances of employment after release, which is listed as a protective factor against recidivism.<sup>74</sup> Good relationships with family/whānau can also act as a protective factor against recidivist offending, as stated previously.<sup>75</sup>

There is very little research on the role of male prisoners in the development of their child's literacy; however, a 2008 report on the Storybook Dads programme suggests it can enhance the prisoner's and child's literacy development, strengthen the father/child bond, and reduce the chances of future reoffending by both father and child.<sup>76</sup> Storybook Dads has now been incorporated into 100 prisons in the United Kingdom as well as the Otago Corrections Facility. The Otago Corrections Facility model is the only one where the men are filmed and a DVD produced. In the other versions the prisoner's reading is recorded to a CD, which, along with the book, is sent to his child. The Howard League for Penal Reform has introduced a programme similar to the United Kingdom Storybook Dads model into Hawke's Bay prison. This is a 12-week programme in which volunteer retired teachers work one-to-one with prisoners and create a CD.

The Mission's Storybook Dads literacy programme aims both to enhance the literary skills of prisoners and their children and the prisoners' relationships with their children and family/whānau in order to increase their successful reintegration into society on release. Storybook Dads aims to strengthen the bond between father/child and encourage the child's own literacy development by showing the father reading a book on the DVD which along with the book is sent to the child. This is important as children's educational development may suffer as a result of their parent/s incarceration, as stated previously.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, if children have learning difficulties or are unmotivated to learn then that is also a risk factor for their own criminal offending later in life.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Storybook Dads, Storybook Dads UK., <http://www.storybookdads.org.uk/page120.html>. accessed 24 January 2013.

<sup>73</sup> 2009; 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon, 2009; Halsey & Deegan, 2012; Hoffman, Byrd & Kightlinger, 2010.

<sup>75</sup> Gordon, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Storybook Dads, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Gordon, 2009; 2010; 2011.

<sup>78</sup> Ruckledge, McLean & Bateup, 2009.

The Department of Corrections provides a range of opportunities so prisoners have the experience and skills employers want. The opportunities are in four categories:

1. Foundation skills programmes in foundation literacy, language and numeracy so offenders have the necessary skills required to complete rehabilitation, reintegration or employment training programmes.
2. Trade and technical training in:
  - building construction and allied trade skills (BCATS)
  - forestry
  - horticulture
  - pre-trade painting
  - motor industry
  - plumbing
  - engineering
  - brick and block laying
3. On the job training covering the engineering, primary, timber and internal services.
4. Self-directed tertiary study.<sup>79</sup>

Storybook Dads is part of this large suite of programmes that are run at Otago Corrections Facility and “comes under Constructive Activities”.<sup>80</sup> Storybook Dads is not part of an offender plan as it is a voluntary programme. It is not delivered nationally and, until this research, its impact has not been extensively evaluated. It is not part of a prisoner’s plan in the United Kingdom either. While it forms part of Reintegration and Rehabilitation, it is not a formal element and is not classified as educational as the Literacy and Numeracy programmes are.

There were two variants of the Storybook Dads Programme available at the Otago Corrections Facility during the evaluated period: the ‘standard’ version and a Kaupapa Māori Programme. The Kaupapa Māori Programme is delivered in partnership with A3 Kaitiaki Limited a subsidiary company of Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou. This variant, which began in 2010, was developed in response to the high number of men selecting stories with Māori content, and including aspects of tikanga (culture) in the DVDs and workbooks. The partnership has The Mission providing its technical and intellectual knowledge of the programme and DVD production, while A3 Kaitiaki brings its expertise in Tikanga and Te Reo Māori.

There are, and have been, programmes delivered within New Zealand Prisons and Corrections Facilities that have many elements in common with the Mission’s Storybook Dads. The primary similarities are the use of children’s books to improve literacy and the recording of the prisoner reading a story that is then sent to one of their children. There was a short-lived programme at Invercargill Prison for which The Mission was requested to train volunteers.

## Objectives of this evaluation

The Storybook Dads programme evaluation is comprised of two parts. The first evaluative theme is to investigate the difference that the programme makes to the literacy levels of the men participating in the programme at the Otago Correctional Facility. This includes identifying and comparing the literacy levels of participants before and after the programme. We aim to compare the literacy of prisoners who took part in the Story Book Dads programme only with those who participated in both Storybook Dads and the Corrections literacy programme. We also investigate what, if any, impact the DVD and book sent to the child has had on the child’s literacy.

The second theme is to explore the impact of the programme on prisoners’ relationships with others. We do this through the perspectives of prisoners, primary caregivers/whānau/family members, and Corrections and Methodist Mission staff. We also document the participants’ thoughts on the value of the programme.

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[http://www.corrections.govt.nz/working\\_with\\_offenders/prison\\_sentences/employment\\_and\\_support\\_programmes/education\\_and\\_training.html](http://www.corrections.govt.nz/working_with_offenders/prison_sentences/employment_and_support_programmes/education_and_training.html)

<sup>80</sup> Email correspondence between The department of Corrections and Charles Pearce 26 March 2013

Additionally, this objective seeks to identify the factors that help the transition of the project from prison to home and to explore similarities and differences in the perception of the value of this project between prisoner, children, and other family members. This was explored via interviews with the programme participants, their family/whānau, and the child who received the DVD and book. While the phrasing of the questions was altered for the audience, they were based on the following:

- What do you think the child you sent the DVD and books to thinks of them?
- What do you think the person your child lives with thinks of them?
- What do you think other people think of them?
- What has Storybook Dads done to your child's reading and writing?
- Which of the following best describes your relationship with your child as a result of Storybook Dads?
- Which of the following best describes your relationship with your child's mother as a result of Storybook Dads?
- Which of the following best describes your relationship with other members of your family / whānau as a result of Storybook Dads?
- Which of the following best describes your relationship with any others as a result of Storybook Dads?

A final objective of the project, which was included in The Mission's funding application, was to enhance its ability to undertake research and evaluation, by developing the majority of the following abilities, to:

1. develop and write high quality methodologies
2. develop and write clear research questions that are relevant, unambiguous, and will provide data useful to others and to us, i.e. the right questions
3. analyse raw data
4. undertake literature reviews
5. write reports that are concise, coherent, meet academic criteria, explain the findings, and, if necessary, make appropriate recommendations
6. understand conflicts of interest and how best to avoid or manage these
7. eliminate or minimize research bias
8. successfully navigate the ethics approval process and self-identify ethical questions relevant to research.

# Methodology

## **Ma whero ma pango ka oti ai te mahi**

*With red and black the work will be complete*

This refers to cooperation where, if everyone does their part, the work will be complete. The colours refer to the traditional kowhaiwhai patterns on the inside of the meeting houses.<sup>81</sup>

## Study design

Three Storybook Dad Programmes and one Kaupapa Māori Storybook Dads Programme were delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility in 2011. The data for this evaluation were collected from participants in the programmes over that time, as well as from a Storybook Dad Programme in 2012.<sup>82</sup>

The methodology used a single case (the Storybook Dads programme in 2011 and the first programme in 2012) with multiple data strands (the literacy and experiences of the individuals from the different groups interviewed – programme participants, primary caregivers and family/whānau, children, Department of Corrections, Workforce Development, and Mission staff<sup>83</sup>) as this was ideal for this project.<sup>84</sup>

Questions, letters and information sheets, and forms that included consent for the participant to take part in the research, consent for the Mission to use the data collected by The Department of Corrections from the Literacy Programme, and consent for the Mission to contact the primary caregiver of the child who received the DVD and book were developed and included with separate ethics approval applications to the Otago Polytechnic and The Department of Corrections Ethics Committees.

As a condition of ethics approval, the Otago Polytechnic Ethics Committee requested that appropriately experienced Māori researchers provide assistance with aspects of the project design, implementation, analysis, and consideration of the results and research implications to confirm/guarantee the intended partnership throughout. A3 Kaitiaki Limited provided cultural advice through a representative on the Governance Panel. Additionally, one of the two data collectors was an A3 Kaitiaki Limited staff member. A Ngai Tahu Law Centre staff member was contracted as a Data Analysis Mentor and also co-authored this report.

The following information was provided to potential research participants:

- The different groups invited to take part
- Taking part was voluntary and they could choose not to
- If they choose to be involved, they could change their mind and stop taking part at any time without having to give a reason
- They could withdraw any information they have given until two weeks after the interview
- They could refuse to answer any question and ask for the tape recorder to be turned off
- That their name or anything that may identify them will not be used anywhere – the interviews will only be identified by a code number or the alias the person interviewed chooses (This report uses a code number only)
- The person who wrote up the interviews (transcriber) signed a confidentiality agreement
- No individual information collected as part of the research was or will be given to the Department of Corrections or Police

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<sup>81</sup> <http://www.maori.cl/Proverbs.htm>

<sup>82</sup> While we were only able to interview 19 SBD participants, we were able to include literacy data from one other participant, meaning that this report contains literacy data from 20 SBD participants

<sup>83</sup> It was intended the Workforce Development staff who deliver the Literacy Programme would be interviewed; however, invitations to be interviewed were not taken up.

<sup>84</sup> Feagin, J., Orum, A., & Sjoberg, G. (Eds.). (1991). *A case for case study*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

- If, at any stage, they said something that raised a concern about their safety or the safety of others the researcher had to report the issues to Corrections staff or the Police
- Their signed consent form and all other paperwork is stored in a lockable cabinet at The Mission's Approach Community Learning and only accessed by the researchers
- The transcribed work from the recordings is stored with all the other Storybook Dads research digital work on a specifically secure part of the Methodist Mission server that is only able to be accessed by the researchers
- All the recordings and transcripts will be destroyed ten (10) years after the completion of the research project
- The results of this research may be published but any information included will in no way be linked to them
- They will be given a written copy of their interview and a summary of the research project when it is completed.

All 42 interviews (19 Storybook Dads participants (Prisoners), 10 Primary caregivers and family/whānau, two Children who received the DVD and book, eight Department of Corrections staff, and three Methodist Mission staff), took place in person or over the phone. The interviewers were two people with considerable experience of programme delivery at the Otago Corrections Facility and with current Department of Corrections' approval. They were selected over external, experienced researchers as this was in keeping with the objective of enhancing The Mission's research capacity. Before beginning any interviews training was provided by experienced researchers from Otago Polytechnic.

The interviews were semi-structured, recorded, and transcribed. The questions explored the evaluation aims (i.e. the difference the Storybook Dads programme at the Otago Corrections Facility makes to the literacy levels of the participants, as well as the difference the programme makes to family/whānau connections and relationships) from different perspectives (participants, primary caregiver and family/whānau, Department of Corrections staff, and Mission staff). Copies of interview schedules are provided in Appendices 1–5.

## Research participants

In order to obtain in-depth understanding of the prisoners' conceptualisations of the Storybook Dad programme and the effects of their relationships and literacy levels, we decided to employ qualitative interviews.<sup>85</sup> Interviews were conducted with 19 prisoners who participated in three Storybook Dad programmes and one Kaupapa Māori Storybook Dads programme delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility during 2011 and 2012. It should be noted that 20 prisoners volunteered to be interviewed but we were only able to interview 19. However, data on the prisoner not interviewed literacy progressions are included in the findings.

We also conducted interviews with ten primary caregivers and family/whānau members in order to gather information on how the prisoner's participation in the programme impacted on them and the prisoner's child. The 10 primary caregivers and family/whānau members consisted of seven mothers, two grandmothers, and one Child Youth and Family<sup>86</sup> (CYF) appointed caregiver. Eight Department of Corrections staff and three Methodist Mission staff involved with the Storybook Dads programme were also interviewed in order to obtain information on their perceptions of how Storybook Dads had affected the prisoners' literacy levels and relationships with others. It should be noted that due to the risk of identification we cannot include the exact positions of the staff members, but all Corrections and Mission staff had a role in either management of the organisations, prisoner supervision and welfare, or the delivery of the Storybook Dads programme.

Finally, in order to acquire their perspective of the DVD and other resources their father had made for them, two interviews were conducted with child recipients of DVDs and books. The children's comments regarding the DVD and books and any subsequent effects the DVD and books had on their literacy levels are noted in the discussion; however, due to the low numbers they were not included in the data analysis.

Because of the small group size and therefore the possibility of identification, demographic information on participants' ages, ethnicity, and so forth was not collected. The number of participants is reported in Table 2.

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<sup>85</sup> Dezin & Lincoln, 1994

<sup>86</sup> Child Youth and Family is a government agency that protects children's welfare. It has the legal power to remove children from homes if abuse or neglect is reported and helps locate guardians/foster families for children when they are unable to be with or have no relationship with a parent (<http://www.cyf.govt.nz>).



**Table 2: The interviewed participants**

Group	Storybook Dads participants (Prisoners)	Primary caregivers/mothers family/whānau	Department of Corrections Staff	Methodist Mission Staff	Children
	19	10	8	3	2

All interviews were audio-recorded and undertaken by one of two interviewers. Sixteen of the prisoner interviews took place at the Otago Corrections Facility; the remaining three at Invercargill Prison as the men had been moved there. All other interviews were conducted either face-to-face at a location of the interviewee's choice or over the telephone. Of the two interviewers, one was a Methodist Mission staff member and the other worked for A3 Kaitiaki Limited. Both had knowledge of the Storybook Dads programme, were known to prisoners and had clearance from the Department of Corrections to enter the prison. These interviewers were specifically selected as this was in keeping with the Methodist Mission's objective of enhancing our research capacity. The interviewers received training in interview technique from Otago Polytechnic staff members who were experienced researchers.

The interview schedule specifically focused on questions that related to the two evaluative themes reported in the previous section and was adjusted for each group of participants and their position (see Appendices). It should be explained however, that the interview schedule contained both open-ended qualitative interview questions and closed questions where the participants' responses were recorded by the interviewer by circling a response on a Likert-scale, which would generally be found on a survey form. This resulted in both quantitative and qualitative data. As mixed methods can build on the strengths and serve to reduce the limitations of both methods,<sup>87</sup> the interview schedule elicited both forms of responses and may have produced more robust data than would have been found using only one method.

Information sheets and consent forms were developed by the project team and approved by both the Otago Polytechnic Ethics Committee and the Department of Corrections Ethics Committees before beginning the fieldwork (see Appendices G and H). As a condition of gaining ethical approval however, the Otago Polytechnic Ethics Committee requested that appropriately experienced Māori researchers be involved at all stages to ensure partnership throughout the research. Consequently, an A3 Kaitiaki Limited representative was included in the research team and a Ngai Tahu Law Centre staff member was contracted as a research mentor and helped co-author this report.

Before all interviews began, participants were provided with the information sheet and consent forms. The information sheet was also read to each participant before the interview. Due to the children's legal status as minors, their caregivers/parents had to give their proxy consent for the children to participate. A separate consent form was signed by the prisoners so that data collected as part of the Department of Corrections' literacy programme could be obtained and compared with data gathered from Storybook Dads assessments.

## The difficulties encountered

It was difficult to recruit participants. For instance, 42 individually addressed information packs (one for each of the prisoners who participated in the three Storybook Dads and one Kaupapa Māori Storybook Dads programme during the research timeframe) about the project were sent to the Otago Corrections Facility. The information packs contained a letter introducing the research project, an information sheet, consent form, and copy of the interview schedule. However, after waiting approximately four weeks only five responses had been received and four of those were incomplete consents and/or requested more information about the project; which meant only one person had fully consented. Members of the research team then contacted the Department of Corrections to find how to attract more participants. It was suggested members of the research team should meet the Storybook Dads participants at the Otago Corrections Facility and discuss the project with them face to face. The research team were told this was in keeping with what has happened with other Corrections based research projects. Subsequently, two meetings took place and, after the project was explained and the prisoners'

<sup>87</sup> Cresswell, 2002; 2005

questions answered, 14 men (six at the first meeting and eight at the second) agreed to take part in the project. Although a further eight agreed to participate, not all were able to be interviewed.

It should also be noted that if prisoners had been relocated to another prison after their participation in Storybook Dads, we endeavoured to make contact with them through a Department of Corrections liaison. Further, 15 of the 42 prisoners who had participated in Storybook Dads had been released and were not approached because their contact details were unavailable. Eight prisoners were either unable to be interviewed due to Corrections restrictions or declined to participate in the project.

Challenges also arose when it came to interviewing the primary caregivers and family/whānau. Eighteen prisoners agreed that the primary caregivers of their children be contacted, and the research team checked with Corrections staff to see if there were any protection orders or similar non-contact constraints in place before proceeding. One protection order was in place and this person was not approached. Those cleared to be contacted were sent a letter introducing the research project, information sheet, consent form, and copy of the interview schedule. After approximately six weeks no consent forms had been returned. A member of the research team sought advice from Ako Aotearoa regarding the situation and on their advice it was agreed to telephone caregivers/mothers/guardians and other family/whānau members to see if they wished to participate in the project. A total of 15 primary caregivers/mothers/guardians and family/whānau members agreed to participate. When the pre-arranged time for the interview arrived, however, a third of those did not show up for the interview or could not be reached by phone (in the case of telephone interviews). As a consequence, 10 caregivers/mothers/guardians and other family/whānau members were interviewed for this research study.

There was considerable discussion regarding interviewing children and having children present during the family/whānau interviews, due to the complexities and potential risks involved of a child overhearing unsavoury information about their father or his crimes. It was decided that the two interviewers needed specific training in interviewing children and managing the risks involved when children are present in interviews. This training was delivered by the research mentor and a Social Services lecturer at Otago Polytechnic who has a Masters in Social Work and considerable experience as a researcher and in working with children and their family/whānau. After seeking advice from these research mentors, cultural advisors, and the Children's Issues Centre: Manawa Rangahau Tamariki at the University of Otago, we decided that excluding children from the interviews with family/whānau members might cause offence, given that children are an integral part of 'family/whānau'. It was decided that if the interviewer considered there was a risk of a child overhearing something about their father, the interview would be stopped. This did not occur. Each primary caregiver was also asked to provide proxy informed consent for the child in their care (who had to be aged five and above) to be interviewed. In all cases the child was interviewed with their primary caregiver present. Only two children were interviewed, and some of their comments are included in the discussion section.

## Data analysis

The programme was evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative measurements included changes to the participants' literacy, as well as interview questions that included Likert-type scales. Although different responses were used through the interviews, all scaling represents a spectrum from the most negative answer (a), to neutral answer (c), and most positive answer (e).<sup>88</sup>

Qualitative data were collected through interviews with the participants, primary caregivers and family/whānau, Department of Corrections staff, and Mission staff; specifically, what was examined were comments on connections with families, the change in the men's self-esteem and belief in themselves, the amount of pride and male identity that might or might not be generated, and the views of those interviewed about the effects of the DVD and books on the children's literacy.

Most of the questions provided an opportunity for both qualitative and quantitative responses. These personal narratives helped with understanding how the Storybook Dads programme affects each person interviewed and allowed specific themes to be identified, compared, and discussed.

Quantitative data gathered during the interviews was collated on excel spreadsheets and a general statistical analysis of this data was undertaken by members of the research team. These data are reported in a basic

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<sup>88</sup> Interview questions for all participants attached as appendices

statistical format that is easily accessible to readers unfamiliar with complex statistics.

Videos of each participant reading at the start and completion of the Storybook Dads programme measure any change to the participants' literacy levels over the course of the programme. In order to measure progress, the Methodist Mission's Practice Leader analysed the videos and compared the participants' literacy skills against the features associated with the Read with Understanding strand of the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission's (2008) *Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy Handbook*.<sup>89</sup> This strand was specifically chosen because it includes a section on the measurement of language and text features, decoding, and vocabulary skills. The chart from the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission outlining these text features and criteria for analysis is included as Appendix A. It should be explained that the Practice Leader has over 10 years' experience in adult foundation-level learning, with a primary focus on literacy and before that was employed as a schoolteacher and school principal for over 20 years. As such he has considerable experience in literacy assessment and teaching and was the most suitable person at the Methodist Mission for the task. It should be noted, however, that this form of assessment is subjective, as are teachers' assessments of student skills when measured against some NCEA level standards.

There are challenges associated with reading aloud (for instance, pace, tone, pauses and so forth) and some prisoners commented on having to overcome these difficulties as well as shyness when they read for the camera. Nevertheless, these aspects were not measured or allowed for by the analyser. This contrasts with the Corrections literacy programme, where literacy progressions are measured using the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool (ALNAT).<sup>90,91</sup>

It should be noted that at the time Storybook Dads was being delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility the Corrections literacy programme was also being delivered there by Workforce Development and some men were required to attend that as part of their sentence plan. After completing 32 hours in this programme, participants' progress is assessed and scores matched against previous tests to determine progress. Assessment data from this literacy programme were obtained to determine the progress of Storybook Dads participants who participated in both Storybook Dads and the Corrections literacy programme. In some cases multiple assessments were done throughout the literacy programme; however, for consistency only the first and second assessments covering the first 32 hours were used to measure change for this evaluation. Unfortunately, this comparison cannot be made as two different measuring techniques and timeframes were used. However, we present these data to highlight how participants can make significant literacy gains in both programmes in very short time frames.

A potential conflict of interest and bias is acknowledged, as one of the research project coordinators, Charles Pearce, is also The Mission's Practice Leader and was responsible for assessing the literacy progress of the Storybook Dads participants. In consultation with the research mentor, it was determined that the only other staff member qualified to carry out the video assessment had delivered the programme during the period being researched and was one of the research interviewers. This person was therefore deemed ineligible to undertake the literacy assessments as this could create an even larger bias. Given this problem, and that the majority of the assessments were completed before the start of the data collection, as well as the fact that Charles was excluded from the data collection and analysis phases of this project, it was decided that the most appropriate procedure would be to allow Charles to continue with the assessments. (The assessments are still subjected to moderation.)

### **Qualitative data analysis**

When it came to analysing the qualitative data, a specific thematic analysis was undertaken of the interview transcripts.<sup>92</sup> The transcripts were read and reread in order to identify common themes or phrases. Comments that illustrated changes in prisoners' perceptions, self-esteem, resiliency, and pride were identified. Comments relating to changes in family/whānau relationships as a result of participating in Storybook Dads were also noted. The participants' statements on their perception of the DVD and workbook, as well as their thoughts on the impact of these on the recipient child's literacy were also recorded. All these comments were cut and pasted

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<sup>89</sup> <http://www.tec.govt.nz>

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/resources/356174>

<sup>91</sup> Due to restrictions the paper version of the assessment is used and the results entered off site.

<sup>92</sup> Maykut & Morehouse, 1994

onto a spreadsheet, which formed the initial stage of data analysis.

No qualitative data analysis software was employed in the data analysis. This was because, as beginning researchers, we thought – and this was agreed by the mentors – that the data analysis was better undertaken manually by Mission staff so we could learn, reflect, and discuss as we went, despite this making the analysis of the interview data a laborious process. In addition, as a charity, the Mission is not in a financial position to buy programmes such as NVIVO and train staff in their use. The results of the analysis are presented in the following section.

## Results

**“Rukutia te taura tangata ki te pou-whare. Motu te taura! Motu atu te tangata.”**

*Maintain the family links.*

If the links are broken the individual is lost.<sup>93</sup>

### Literacy gains

The mean gain in literacy steps as a result of participation in the Storybook Dads programme when assessed against criteria laid out in the Read with Understanding strand of the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission's (2008) *Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy Handbook* was 0.59 of a step. The most steps gained were two, and eight participants did not advance their literacy skills when assessed against these criteria. Unfortunately, the literacy progressions of three prisoners could not be assessed because they were not videoed at the beginning of the Storybook Dads programme (see Table 3). As stated previously, some participants in the Storybook Dads programme also participated in the Corrections' literacy programme and these have been noted with a star in Table 3. Participant 13 was not interviewed.

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<sup>93</sup> The authors acknowledge that this same whakatauki appears in the 1988 study by Heather Deane of the Institute of Criminology at the Victoria University of Wellington – *The social effects of imprisonment on male prisoners and their families*.

**Table 3: The literacy progression of Storybook Dad participants**

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Start/End Assessment dates</i>	<i>Step at start</i>	<i>Step at end</i>	<i>Literacy progression (steps)</i>
SBD 1	July 2011 / Aug 2011	2	2	0
SBD 2*	July 2011 / Aug 2011	4	4	0
SBD 3*	July 2011 / Aug 2011	2	3	1
SBD 4*	Nov 2011 / Dec 2011	3	4	1
SBD 5	July 2011 / Aug 2011	3	4	1
SBD 6	Mar 2011 / Apr 2011	unavailable	4	---
SBD 7	Mar 2011 / Apr 2011	3	4	1
SBD 8	Feb 2012 / Mar 2012	4	4	0
SBD 9*	Feb 2012 / Mar 2012	3	3	0
SBD 10	July 2011 / Aug 2011	2	4	2
SBD 11*	Feb 2012 / Mar 2012	3	4	1
SBD 12*	Nov 2011 / Dec 2011	4	4	0
SBD 13*	Mar 2011 / Apr 2011	2	3	1
SBD 14*	July 2011 / Aug 2011	2	3	1
SBD 15	July 2011 / Aug 2011	4	4	0
SBD 16	July 2011 / Aug 2011	3	4	1
SBD 17	Feb 2012 / Mar 2012	4	4	0
SBD 18	Mar 2011 / Apr 2011	unavailable	6	---
SBD 19	Nov 2011 / Dec 2011	4	4	0
SBD 20	Mar 2011 / Apr 2011	unavailable	4	---
<i>Average progression:</i>				0.59

Data on the literacy progress of participants who took part in both the Corrections' literacy and the Storybook Dads programmes are included in Table 4.

**Table 4: Assessment of prisoners' literacy progress on the Department of Corrections' literacy and Storybook Dads programmes**

<i>Participant</i>	<b>Department of Corrections Literacy Programme data (32 hour programme)</b>				<b>Storybook Dads Programme data (20 hour programme)</b>			
	<i>Start/End Assessment Dates</i>	<i>Step at Start</i>	<i>Step at End</i>	<i>Increase in literacy progression (steps)</i>	<i>Start/End Assessment Dates</i>	<i>Step at Start</i>	<i>Step at End</i>	<i>Literacy progression (steps)</i>
SBD 2	July 2010/Mar 2011	3	4	1	July 2011/Aug 2011	4	4	0
SBD 3	Mar 2011/Aug 2011	1	4	3	July 2011/Aug 2011	2	3	1
SBD 4	Dec 2011/Feb 2012	3	6	3	Nov 2011/Dec 2011	3	4	1
SBD 9	Jan 2012/Mar 2012	3	5	2	Feb 2012/Mar 2012	3	3	0
SBD 11	May 2011/Apr 2012	1	5	4	Feb 2012/Mar 2012	3	4	1
SBD 12	July 2011/Aug 2011	3	4	1	Nov 2011/Dec 2011	4	4	0
SBD 13	July 2010/May 2011	3	4	1	Mar 2011/Apr 2011	2	3	1
SBD 14	Jun 2011/Aug 2011	1	3	2	July 2011/Aug 2011	2	3	1
<i>Average progression:</i>				2.13	0.63			



Each participant's progress on the Corrections' Literacy Programme was reviewed after 32 hours of classroom time. This meant a new report re-evaluating reading and writing, thereby assessing change, is generated approximately every 8–10 weeks.

Data from the Corrections Literacy programme were calculated using the initial and second assessments from the Learner Progress Reports only and 32 hours of classroom time were allocated (see Table 4). This meant that in five cases subsequent assessments were ignored.

Although participants achieved in both programmes it should be noted that because the literacy gains were measured using two different scales they cannot be directly compared. Nevertheless, results highlight how both programmes are successful in fostering a prisoner's literacy progressions

## Literacy change perceptions

### Programme participants

We also investigated whether the Storybook Dads participants believed their literacy skills had changed as a result of participation in the programme. When asked, *"What has Storybook Dads done to your reading and writing?"*, 63% (n=12) of the men reported either no change or they did not know if their literacy had changed, 26% (n=5) said participation had made their literacy better, and 11% (n=2) said participation had made their literacy much better. Six (31.6%) commented that their literacy skills were already good. These statistics show 37% (n=7) of the participants reported their reading and writing had improved as a result of participation in the programme, which is interestingly below the 53% (9 of 17) recorded in the Mission's assessment, particularly as only three prisoners self-reported increases matched Mission assessments. It should be noted that one of the men who thought his reading and writing had been made much better was in the group not assessed by The Mission. In other words, six prisoners thought their literacy had not improved when it had, and four thought their literacy had changed when assessment showed it had not. These figures are significant, given that an increase in participants' literacy levels may result in better chances of obtaining post-release employment and therefore a better reintegration into society (See Table 5).

**Table 5: Prisoners' perceived increases in their literacy progression as a result of Storybook Dads**

Made literacy much better	Had made literacy better	No change or did not know if their literacy had improved
11%	26%	63%

Participants who reported that their literacy had improved as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads attributed this to be being provided with an opportunity to practice their reading and to attention to detail in creating the books. For example:

- *"Made it better in a way, because I – well, having to research and, and read and, and write and spell things correctly, it's helped in that, in that sort of context."*<sup>94</sup>
- *"I was shy... to do the DVD I was shy, and it's a lot different reading... we can read in our head, we can read something on a piece of paper and read it all in our head and then maybe read to ourselves. But actually to read it out aloud and... and be presenting it to someone that's watching it, yeah, it builds your self-esteem."*<sup>95</sup>

The second excerpt also highlights how participating in the Storybook Dads programme boosted this participant's self-esteem, an aim we sought to investigate.

We then compared the men's self-assessments by comparing them with their Storybook Dads literacy progress. Six of the 16 (37.5%) available data sets matched (three had no start assessment), six (37.5%) of the self-assessments were understated (they believed they had improved less than the Mission's assessment showed),

<sup>94</sup> SBD participant 2

<sup>95</sup> SBD participant 6

and four were overstated (they believed they had improved more than the Mission's assessment showed). These results are shown in Figure 1, with the matching data shown in the first two columns.

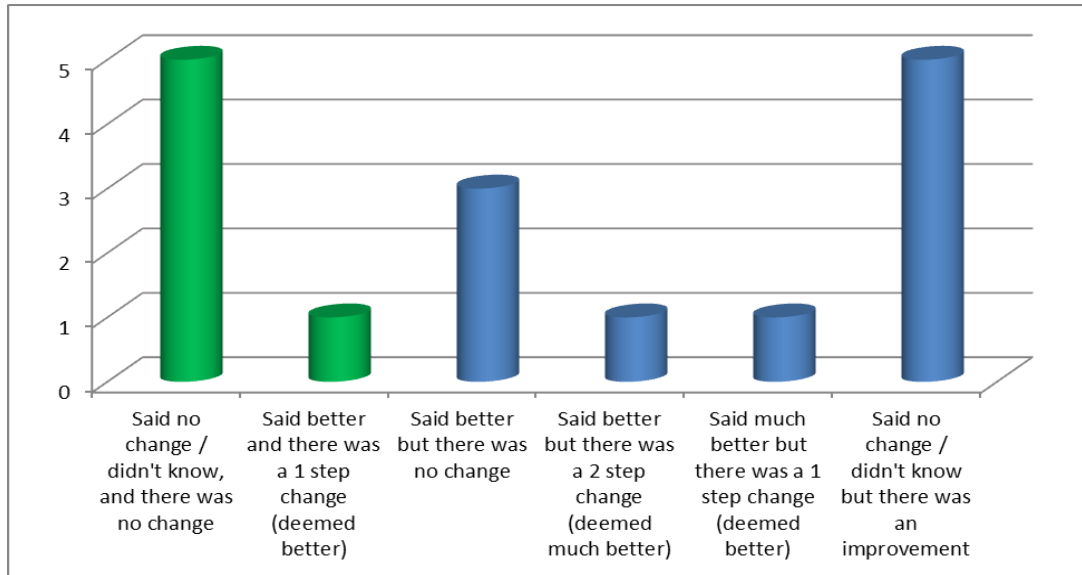


Figure 1: Prisoners' self- assessment versus Mission assessment.

### Primary caregivers and family/whānau

Although primary caregivers and family/whānau members were not specifically asked about the men's literacy progressions as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads, it was mentioned during their interviews. For instance "...it's given him the ability to learn to read better."<sup>96</sup>

### Staff

The eight Department of Corrections staff and three Mission staff were asked what impact they thought Storybook Dads had on the men's literacy. Six of the eight (75%) Department of Corrections and two of the three (33.3%) Mission staff thought it had made participants' literacy better or much better. This response is reported in Table 5.

**Table 5: Staff perceptions of the development of the prisoners' literacy as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads**

Number of staff:	Had made literacy better or much better	No change or did not know if their literacy had improved
Prison staff	6	2
Methodist Mission staff	2	1

<sup>96</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 5

When Department of Corrections and Mission staff were asked about the reasons for their responses, many mentioned other, broader aspects of literacy and did not focus on reading and writing. Staff participants mentioned how prisoners gained a sense of determination, enjoyment, and a positive sense of self from their participation in the programme, which they said were favourable for their reintegrating in to society after release. Staff participants also stated that the programme was important because it provided the men with motivation not only to improve their literacy, but also for support and self-belief, as well as more positive attitudes and behaviour. Comments included the following:

- *Oh, much better, much better. It was in an environment where they learnt without fear. You know without fear of ridicule. It was enjoyable and everybody learns, yeah, much easier when they are actually enjoying what they are doing. I think they got a deeper learning too, because they had to play with the language.*<sup>97</sup>
- *"Yeah, and I think it's good from a confidence-building point of view that they have to read out loud, so we get to hear how well they read. As opposed to just assuming – when we do through literacy and numeracy."*<sup>98</sup>
- *"It's changed, yeah, it's changed their reading and writing skills but it's also changed their, um, their temperament. Um, they're a lot easier to handle."*<sup>99</sup>
- *".. my understanding is that, that we are fighting the men off with a stick! They want to enrol, they really want to enrol, and so my first assessment is that there is something good going on in there. And if guys inside want to join in to something, then it's a good thing. And having seen them at graduation, and the pride and the rebirth for some of them of mana within their family, I think that before you get to reading and writing you have to clear away some of the psycho-social clutter that's built up over time. And some of the spiritual and psychic damage that comes out of poor life choices, you know, the life choices the people have made as they were kids themselves, and then they've gone on to repeat – my understanding is that they make literacy progressions in a much shorter period of time that the literature suggests. And I don't know if that's something the men themselves notice, but I'm not surprised, given the enthusiasm they have for it before it starts, you know, to get on to it. And the enthusiasm and satisfaction I've personally seen in them at graduation – I'm not surprised that there's a real shift in their reading and writing capabilities."*<sup>100</sup>

These comments highlight how Corrections and Methodist Mission staff believe that a prisoner's self-confidence, trust in others, and mana are improved as a result of participating in the Storybook Dad's programme. Positive attitudes towards themselves may also result in more favourable behaviour while incarcerated and in turn make prisoners more cooperative and respectful of staff, as excerpt three above (Corrections staff 4) suggests. It appears that the staff participants had a more holistic understanding of the men's development from Storybook Dads.

The following comment shows how a Corrections staff member believes that participation in Storybook Dads may also reduce a prisoner's risk of reoffending and therefore is beneficial to society as a whole.

- *"They feel a bit more confident about the reading and writing the – their own reading and writing ability. So therefore they're more receptive to communicate, um, openly with people I think. Um, not in all cases but in most cases we... I find that, you know? They would... they would start to ask questions, um, because they felt more confident, because they can read and write, you know? And all them used to say was, um, the Māori word for it is, whakama, you know, the embarrassment? ... one of them has sworn that he'll never reoffend again because he can read and write. Because that's the only reason that he did offend – because he couldn't read and write."*<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Corrections 3

<sup>98</sup> Corrections 2

<sup>99</sup> Corrections 4

<sup>100</sup> Mission 3

<sup>101</sup> Corrections 6

## Perceived improvement in children's literacy

### Prisoners

When all participants were asked if Storybook Dads had affected the prisoner's child's reading and writing, a significant number of the prisoners, primary caregivers, and family/whānau, reported a belief that the programme had helped to improve the child's literacy.

Ten (53%) prisoners considered that their child's reading and writing had been improved by the books and DVDs they had made for them. Many commented that their children were encouraged to read and write as a result of receiving the DVD and book. One prisoner reported how the DVD and book made reading and writing exciting for the prisoners' children; others said they felt more connected with their child. Some prisoners continued to help their child's learning after completing the programme by, for instance, practising the alphabet with their child over the telephone. Although it cannot be ascertained that the DVD and book did actually result in an increase in their child's literacy (the children's literacy progressions were unable to be measured), this information shows that the prisoners acquired a sense of pride and accomplishment from their perception that the learning resources they made would make such an increase possible.

Of the nine (47%) prisoners who reported there was no improvement in their child's literacy or they were unsure if their child's reading had improved as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads, one reported that his child was autistic and that he hoped the Storybook Dads programme would help his child's development, a second expressed a desire that his participation in Storybook Dads would help his child's literacy learning, while another reported his child particularly enjoyed reading and writing already.

### Primary caregivers and family/whānau

Sixty percent (6) of the primary caregivers and family/whānau members reported that the book and DVD from Storybook Dads had made the child's reading and writing better. Comments included:

- *"She's good with books as it was, um, but yeah, I think the fact that he's actually reading is something that is striking for her."*<sup>102</sup>
- *"She grabbed a piece of paper and pen and wrote down, she started writing down what he was saying – the actual words he was saying"*<sup>103</sup>

These comments highlight how seeing their fathers reading facilitated the child's own literacy development.

### Staff

One Department of Corrections staff member made a comment showing how the Storybook Dads programme impacted on the prisoners' children's literacy and desire to learn"

*"I don't know how many times I have heard about these children wanting to go to the library. They have never been to the library before. You know, they have never been to the library, their parents never thought of taking them to the library, but they wanted to go to the library, they want books and they want to read, and for some of these kids this is the first time they've ever seen a book. You know, and then it's first book in their homes...that they've owned themselves. So that was really, really cool. Because then, then they got to the library and they saw so many other things that happen, at the library. You know, story telling classes and you've got this and you've got that, and all these other."*<sup>104</sup>

This comment indicates that desire of the children, as well as the families to go to public libraries – which can only improve the children's literacy – increases as a result of seeing their fathers reading on the DVD and then reading the books they are sent.

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<sup>102</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 8

<sup>103</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 3

<sup>104</sup> Corrections 3

## Perceptions of the childrens' use of the DVDs and books

### Prisoners

84% (16) of the prisoners said the child either likes or loves the DVD and book they receive. One participant commented that *"(my daughter) likes to watch it all the time, like all the time. So Mum, like, sometimes has to hide the DVD."*<sup>105</sup> This man's comments indicate that he experienced pleasure in his daughter's enjoyment of the DVD and workbook he had made for her.

The prisoners were also asked for their opinions on what other people thought of the DVDs and books, and 79% (15) considered that the person their child lives with, and/or other family/whānau members, either liked or loved them. For instance:

- "They love them too...they reckon it's primo as. I see my Nana and she reckons that when she seen it she started crying, 'Oh he's too good to be in jail, he's such a good father.' You know? My sister she wrote me a letter, and was saying, 'You know that was awesome, made me so happy, ra ra ra, to see you like that.' And, yeah, Mum and Dad love it, you know, they're always going: 'Oh yeah, the kids want the DVDs out and they're sitting there watching them over and over and reading the books.'" <sup>106</sup>*

### Primary caregivers and family/whānau

The primary caregiver and family/whānau participants were asked how often the child would watch the DVD or read the book: five (50%) said a lot; four (40%) said quite a bit; while only one (10%) said hardly ever (see Figure 2). These statistics highlight how the children enjoyed reading the book and/or looking at the DVD their father had made for them.

When asked what they thought of the DVD and books made by the prisoners, all the primary caregivers and family/whānau members gave positive responses, with seven (70%) saying they loved them and three (30%) that they liked them. 80% (8) thought the child who received the DVD and book loved them, and 20% (2) said the child liked them (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Primary caregivers and family/whānau members' attitudes towards the DVD and book made by the prisoners and their thoughts regarding children's attitudes towards the DVD and book**

Primary caregivers and family/whānau members:	Loved them	Like them
<i>Themselves</i>	7	3
<i>Children</i>	8	2

Some primary caregivers and family/whānau members went on to explain how the DVD impacted on the relationship between father and child. For instance:

- "The DVD was quite overwhelming, and he told her all about living in the big wide world, and don't get mixed up like your Dad has, and all the rest of it. He sung some songs on it, he read her this beautiful story, which the book came too, which was lovely, one of her favourite books, she carts it around all over the place. I thought it was very well done, considering he's a guy that has violent tendencies, it was the most gentle thing I've ever seen, and it showed how important this wee girl was in his life. And it will be a treasure to hold onto for years to come, to say, "Well, I've got that" as they get a bit older and understand more."*<sup>107</sup>
- "Um, I guess it's made them a wee bit closer and like, given them a wee bit more of an understanding. But they sorta understand now that they can see him on TV but they can't see him in person."*<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> SBD 9

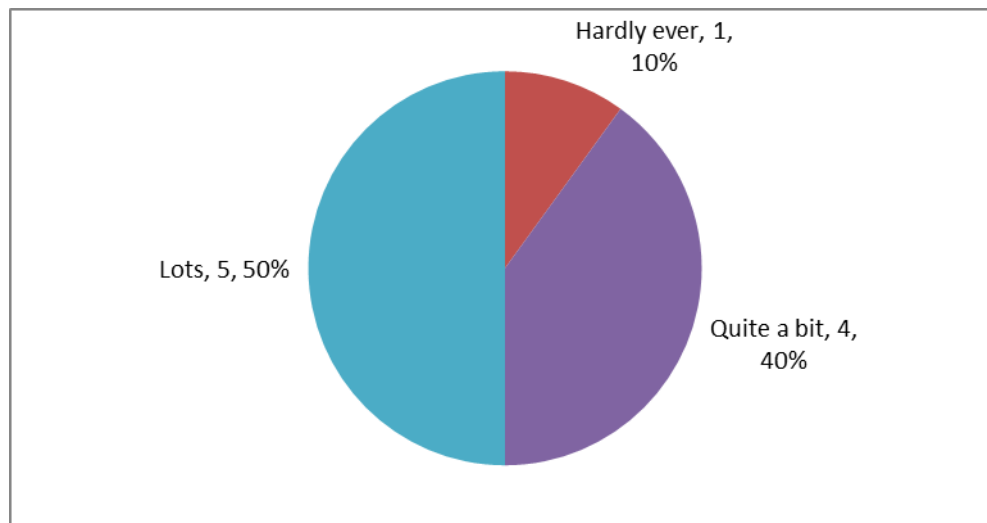
<sup>106</sup> SBD9

<sup>107</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 5

<sup>108</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 5

Both comments highlight how the children treasured the DVD made by their fathers with whom they had limited contact due to his imprisonment.

When the primary caregivers and family/whānau were asked how often the child watches the DVD or reads the book 5 said lots, 4 said quite a bit, and 1 said hardly ever. This is represented in Figure 2.



*Figure 2: The frequency with which children read the book or watch the DVD sent to them by their father via the Storybook Dads Programme, according to their primary caregivers and family/whānau.*

## Relationships

All groups of participants were asked how the prisoners' participation in Storybook Dads had impacted on relationships, which directly relates to aim two of the research study. Results show that Storybook Dads is successful in improving prisoners' relationships.

### Prisoners

The majority of the men who participated in Storybook Dads reported that their relationships with their children, family/whānau members, their child's mother, and other people had improved as a consequence of their participation in the programme. Data on prisoners' perceptions of their changes in their relationships are reported in Table 7.

**Table 7: Prisoner's perceptions of how their relationships changed as a result of participating in Storybook Dads**

Prisoners' relationships with:	<i>Much better</i>	<i>Better</i>	<i>No change/do not know if there is change</i>
Children	21%	37%	42%
Child's mother	16%	21%	63%
Family/whānau members	11%	53%	37%
Anyone else (i.e. friends, prison staff and others) <sup>109</sup>	29%	47%	24%

<sup>109</sup> Answered by only 17 prisoners



When the men were asked whether their participation in Storybook Dads had impacted on their relationships with their children, 11 (58%) responded positively, with four (21%) reporting that it had made the relationship with their child much better and seven (37%) that it made the relationship better. Eight (42%) said there was no change, or they did not know if their participation in Storybook Dads affected their relationship with their child.

It should be noted, however, that four prisoners discussed how they were afraid that the book and DVD they had made would either not be sent to their child, or the child would be forbidden to watch it by their mother/guardian. One participant explained that he thought his child's mother would not let him/her watch the DVD because of his appearance.

One participant went explained in detail how his participation in Storybook Dads improved his relationship with his son:

- *"Um, well, my son doesn't really know me, you know, like he comes to visits and, um, we haven't got that bond yet. I haven't had that opportunity to have that bond. The DVD was more or less to, um, recognise who I am, you know – my voice – as he was growing up, so, so when it come to creating that bond with me it's not just new, he kinda know... he knows that I'm kinda familiar in a way. You know, and in a... in a..., like, my girls have that bond with me that, um, they'll never forget me. I was there for their childhood and, um, oh, they still talk to me now but, um, they'll never forget and, and their – him seeing them like that would be to, like, kind of help him, you know, 'coz he'll want that, that bond, so."*<sup>110</sup>

Prisoners were also asked if their participation in Storybook Dads impacted on their relationship with their child's mother. Seven (37%) reported that the programme made the relationship with their child's mother better, while 12 (63%) said there was no change or they did not know if the relationship with their child's mother had been impacted by their participation in the programme.

When asked if their participation in Storybook Dads affected their relationship with other family/whānau members, 54% (12) of the prisoners gave a positive response and none of them thought the relationship had been negatively impacted; most ( $n=10$ ) thought it had been made better, and two much better. Seven (37%) said there was no change, or they did not know if their participation in Storybook Dads impacted on their relationships with other family/whānau members. Some participants commented on how their relationships had been strengthened by their participation in Storybook Dads:

- *"I think Mum's just proud of me for, you know, for still... for just not giving up."*<sup>111</sup>
- *"Mum thought it was good that, you know, I'm not giving up on him even, you know, you're restrained, you're in four walls... I'm away from, you know, he's... he's in a different part of the country um yeah and I'm still... still trying, yeah."*<sup>112</sup>
- *"I only really have contact with my grandmother. But, um, I think she actually sits down and has a watch with (my daughter) as well, you know, she might say that I'm trying to make a bit more of an effort for, um yeah, you know, I think it does."*<sup>113</sup>

Finally, prisoners were asked if Storybook Dads changed their relationships with anyone else (for example friends, guards, and fellow prisoners). Of the 17 that answered the question 76% (13) gave positive responses, with 29% (5) reporting that these relationships were made much better, 47% (8) better and the remaining 24% (4) that there was no change or they did not know if these relationships had changed as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads.<sup>114</sup> One went on to explain how his relationship with other prisoners changed as a result of his participation in Storybook Dads:

- *"Oh, definitely, makes us stronger as... as, um, you know, like, all the... all the fellas that did it, the course, ya know...we want to help each other, we didn't criticise any one, you know, we didn't want to bring anyone down, 'cos of what they wanted to do, we all just said "yeah, bro," ya know, "mean, mean" ...everyone did,*

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<sup>110</sup> SBD 7

<sup>111</sup> SBD 15

<sup>112</sup> SBD 1

<sup>113</sup> SBD 19

<sup>114</sup> Only 17 prisoners were asked this question.

*you know? So, nah, definitely make us tighter as mates even though some of us might not be as a good a mates in the wing and that, you know, but when it come to being in here, you... we all just, yeah no, we're real tight, you know?"*<sup>115</sup>

### **Primary caregivers and family/whānau**

Primary caregivers and family/whānau members were also asked whether they thought the prisoner's relationship with his child had improved as a result of his participation in Storybook Dads: 60% (6) said the father's relationship with his child was better, while 40% (4) said there was no change or they did not know. One person in this group commented, *"Um, definitely, given me better view of his effort as a father really"*,<sup>116</sup> while another explained how the prisoner's relationship with his child had changed as a result of his participation in Storybook Dads:

- *"I think, god, what a lot of courage being able to put those things in words. And it was a very sincere message to Susan (name changed for confidentiality) who was, like I say, was a bit young to pick it all up – even now she'd pick more up in it – and it helped me see: I've always felt there was another side to him. Even when she was little I used to take her out to the prison and he had no idea how to hold her or feed her and they helped him along. It's not that he doesn't want to be dad: he doesn't know quite how. So this has given him some tools, and something that's of him- that's being given to her. I was quite, I think I looked at it and I thought, I think I'd always seen like that – 'coz he came out of a broken home situation. He was in CYFs care himself so that devastation of your own child going into care - and the guys do feel powerless, and I think it was something he could give. And I mean I don't think it's adjusted how I see him, I think I always saw that gentle side to him anyway, but I thought what courage to stand there and say, "I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, and I don't want that for you". It was very honest stuff –"*<sup>117</sup>

This comment also illustrates how this participant's relationship with her son was affected by his participation in Storybook Dads. The comments illustrate the compassion the participant now feels for her son and her admiration of his attempts to reach out to his daughter.

When the primary caregivers and family/whānau members were asked if their relationships with the prisoners had changed as a result of his participation in Storybook Dads 40% (4) said it had made their relationships with the prisoner better, and 60% (6) said there was no change or they did not know. All primary caregivers and family/whānau reported that there was no change or that they did not know if there were changes in the men's relationships with other family/whānau as a result of their relative's participation in Storybook Dads; however, two (20%) thought it had made the men's relationships with anyone else better. The majority (80%,  $n=8$ ) said there was no change or they did not know. These data are reported in Table 8.

**Table 8: Primary caregivers and family/whānau participants' perceptions of how prisoners' relationships had changed with the following people as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads**

<i>Perceptions of improvement of prisoners' relationships with:</i>	<i>Much better</i>	<i>Better</i>	<i>No change/do not know if there is change</i>
Children	-	60%	40%
Themselves	-	40%	60%
Anyone else (i.e. friends, prison staff and others)	-	20%	80%

<sup>115</sup> SBD 1

<sup>116</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 8

<sup>117</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 6

## Staff

Half (4) of the Corrections staff reported that prisoners' participation in Storybook Dads had improved their relationship with the prisoners with one (12.5%) saying it was much better and three (37.5%) better. The remaining four said there was no change or they did not know if their relationships with prisoners had changed. The results were the exactly the same when asked how the programme had impacted the men's relationships with anyone else.

The Corrections staff made the following comments about prisoners and their relationships with themselves and other members of prison staff:

- *"There's the unit staff, you know, I remember the unit staff saying, "Wow", they just, "Wow is that the same guy" [Laughter] you know, "that left, you know, two hours ago, three hours ago?"<sup>118</sup>*
- *"I've watched guys in here who tough up and they put on their masks and their personas and walk with a certain stance, even to the programme. And yet, at the completion of the programme, they're very, very quiet, very responsible."<sup>119,120</sup>*
- *We've got a very young work force on site here. This prison has only been open five years and 54.5% of our staff have less than five years' experience, five years or less. So they're still embracing the philosophy, they're still learning and growing in confidence within themselves. So I would say the benefits from Storybook Dads – it would benefit our younger more inexperienced staff, because the prisoners, you see that transformation and the staff can link that back to Storybook Dads. Because every interaction that our staff have with a prisoner is file noted every positive interaction and/or negative interaction is file noted, and that usually is linked to a particular programme. Our staff all have a case load of prisoners that they work with on a daily basis. And their conversations are around "Oh, how did your Storybook Dads go today?" "Oh, fantastic," you know? So definitely it's not something that's happening in the classroom or in front of the camera in the programme area that is isolated from the unit. So when the prisoner comes back, our staff part of their mahi or work is to engage or talk about it, so certainly it isn't lost."<sup>121</sup>*

These comments suggest that Corrections staff believe that participating in Storybook Dads results in better relationships between prisoners and Corrections staff, as well as improved behaviour among prisoners. The first excerpt also highlights how the staff member perceives there is a marked change in participants after they take part in Storybook Dads, while the second shows that Corrections staff can use prisoners' participation in Storybook Dads as a conversation starter and as a way to gain confidence and improve their relationships with the prisoners.

When Mission staff were asked how their relationship with the men changed as a result of Storybook Dads, one (33.3%) said it made it better and two (66.6%) said there was no change or they didn't know. When asked how the programme affected the men's relationship with anyone else, the responses were reversed with two (66.6%) saying it made it better while one (33.3%) said there was no change or they didn't know.

The Mission staff's comments include the following:

- *I think they have a better opinion of themselves, 'coz their confidence has gone way up"<sup>122</sup>*
- *"I find that as each programme progresses I build relationships with the men, and it's largely through that, that we get the work done, I think. It's the facilitators' ability to show respect for and a non-judgemental face, eh? It's largely how the programme works, I think. One of the foundation stones really is that prisoners don't feel judged. They feel respected, they feel that the programme provides a wee space in this quite, you know, intense place they live in, where they feel almost like an individual human being again."<sup>123</sup>*

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<sup>118</sup> Corrections 3

<sup>119</sup> Corrections 2

<sup>120</sup> Parts of the above were removed to protect confidentiality

<sup>121</sup> Corrections 1

<sup>122</sup> Mission 2

<sup>123</sup> Mission 1

There was feedback from Corrections and Mission staff that not all had noticed a change in the relationship. Comments included:

- *"I would have gotten to know them better absolutely. The relationship didn't change because it can't change; it needs to be the – what it needs to be."*<sup>124</sup>
- *"I've got no change, I don't know, but no, it probably makes it better. But in saying that, I always have a good rapport with these guys, anyhow. Um, because I treat them as equals, I guess. And I never talk down to them. I'm on the same level."*<sup>125</sup>

Responses from the Department of Corrections staff and Mission staff are displayed in Table 9.

**Table 9: Department of Corrections staff and Mission staff views on how prisoners' relationships had changed with the following people as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads descriptions of how they believe Storybook Dads has affected the programme participants' relationships**

<i>Perceptions of improvement of prisoners' relationships with:</i>	<i>No change/do not know if there is change</i>	<i>Better</i>	<i>Much better</i>
Them	6	4	1
Other people	5	5	1

<sup>124</sup> Corrections 3

<sup>125</sup> Mission 2

## Discussion and conclusions

**E kore te patiki e hoki ki tona puehu**  
*The flounder (fish) does not return to his dust*  
Do not make the same mistake twice.<sup>126</sup>

### Literacy development

The first aim of this evaluation of Storybook Dads was to evaluate prisoners' literacy development. On average, prisoners improved 0.59 of a step on the Read with Understanding strand of the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission's (2008) *Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy Handbook* after their participation in Storybook Dads. Prisoners who participated in both Storybook Dads and the compulsory prison literacy programmes improved by 0.63 of a step. The difference in the increase in steps between the two programmes is small and therefore insignificant.

Participants in both programmes made gains in their literacy development in a very short period of time. The short duration of Storybook Dads in particular may mean it is easier to improve literacy in a prison context. As Storybook Dads runs for 20 hours this makes it possible for the programme to run multiple times a year and therefore more prisoners can take part in the programme. As a result, more prisoners have the opportunity to develop their literacy, which is necessary for their reintegration and active participation in society.

When it came to assessing their literacy development, 14 of the 17 (82%) prisoners for whom assessment data were available and who were interviewed, either over- or underestimated their literacy improvement. Three (18%) reported that their literacy had improved as a result of their participation in Storybook Dads, when, according to the data, it had not. Nevertheless, for these men the self-belief that such development may have, or indeed *can* lead to literacy development, could impact on their desire to continue to working on their literacy.

The majority of prisoners (53%,  $n=10$ ) and primary caregivers and family/whānau members 60% ( $n=6$ ) reported that they considered that a man's participation in Storybook Dads (and the subsequent book and DVD he produced), improved the child recipient's reading and writing. However, this cannot be verified as the child recipient's literacy levels before and after receiving the DVD and book from their father were not measured. As a consequence such information must be considered anecdotal. We argue, however, that the proportion of family/whānau reporting gains in the child's literacy development does suggest a gain in the child's reading and writing ability. Future research needs to explore the child's literacy development after receiving the DVD and book made by their father.

### Relationships

Storybook Dads improves relationships for multiple people, with 48% of the total surveyed reporting that at least one relationship improved. The relationship that improves most significantly is the father–child relationship with, well over half (17 of 29, 58%) of prisoners, primary caregivers, and family/ whānau reporting that the relationship between father/child had either been made better or much better.

Many of the men on the programme reported having never read a story to their children. Some men have, and miss it dreadfully. Men speak to the tutors about missing being able to do things with their children, and they often say that they cannot wait to get back to them. Making a learning resource for their child was the primary motivator for prisoners' participation in Storybook Dads. The desire to improve the relationship with their child could not only help the father–child relationship develop, but may also lead to an increase in the prisoners' self-esteem, fostering a continued desire to learn and reducing the potential risk of re-offending. Many men also expressed a desire to continue to improve all their relationships, not just the relationships with their children.

In the programme, prisoners also display positive behaviour, such as cooperation and determination, which Corrections staff reported transferred to other areas of the facility. Corrections staff commented that the men's

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.maori.cl/Proverbs.htm>

'tough and hard' demeanour in the general environment changed to that of a 'caring and nurturing' father in the Storybook Dad's setting. Storybook Dads fosters trust between participants as well as between them and the tutors, with the men often asking tutors for parenting advice.

Storybook Dads encourages pride in self, children, and whānau. The men often ask the tutors what they would say to their own children in certain circumstances, and how they would deal with different situations. Moments like these provide chances to explore positive aspects of parenting, and the way that language can be used as power. There are discussions about fairness within a family, how children are little people, how the men's relationship with the children's mother may affect their relationships with their children, and how to put all of that aside and look at what is best for the children.

## Additional significance of the Storybook Dads programme

One of the most interesting questions in the survey asked the various groups who they believed gained the most as a result of Storybook Dads. This is a thought-provoking question as it gives the respondents an opportunity to look at the programme from different points of view and reflect on the impact it has on everyone involved.

Opinions were split in terms of responses. Some of the programme participants said they believed the children gained most because the programme allowed the child to see their dad as a role model. Other programme participants believed they gained the most themselves, as the programme offered them the opportunity to reflect on parenting, room to grow and mature as a parent, and the tools to show their children that they loved them.

Six of the primary caregivers and family/whānau felt both the men and the child benefited from the programme. They believed that children gained quite a bit from just knowing that their dad took the time and effort to create something special for them, and they observed that the dads gained confidence by being able to achieve something quite meaningful for their children as well as there being an opportunity for personal reflection.

- *"Well, I think the child gains hugely, in something like that: but it's probably a two-way street because dad's probably gaining, too: he's able to think about what he wants to say, I mean, that's quite soul searching stuff, isn't it?"<sup>127</sup>*

As with the other groups, Department of Corrections staff opinions also varied on who gained most from the programme and what those gains were. They felt that the prisoners benefited significantly from the Storybook Dads programme in that it increased their confidence, gave them a more positive self-image, and allowed them increased family connection. The prisoners' positive change in attitude also benefited the families and the community at large – staff felt that this programme reduced the risk of re-offending, which is obviously extremely advantageous to society:

- *"... they feel a bit more confident about the reading and writing the – their own reading and writing ability. So therefore they're more receptive to communicate, um, openly with people, I think. Um, not in all cases but in most cases we I find that, you know? They would... they would start to ask questions, um, because they felt more confident because they can read and write, you know? And all them used to say was, um, the Māori word for it is, whakama, you know, the embarrassment? ... One of them has sworn that he'll never reoffend again because he can read and write. Because that's the only reason that he did offend because he couldn't read and write."<sup>128</sup>*

Finally, Mission staff also agreed that the children, men, and families all gained from the programme. After the programme the men clearly appeared to have better opinions of themselves, more confidence, and better social skills. Alongside that and the literacy gains for the fathers and their children, the whānau as a whole enjoyed the opportunity to share a positive experience.

- *"By gum, it's difficult! Because I think it depends, the time scale – in the short term I think the men in the prison, on the course. But if we wait, and it works, and they find a better way to be a Dad, then over a long time the people who benefit the most are the tamariki. And if the tamariki are benefiting, then the wahine are*

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<sup>127</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 6

<sup>128</sup> Corrections 6



*benefiting, and it comes back around. So short term: the men; medium term: the kids; long term: the whānau. And that would be what I would hope for.*"<sup>129</sup>

## Prisoner's perceptions of the programme

One very positive aspect that was universally acknowledged is that the men genuinely enjoy being a part of the programme. At the end of the course, they often say how thankful they are for the opportunity to be a father and to be treated as human beings – something that is a contrast to their usual daily experiences. Within the space created by this course they are able to talk about their children, and even use endearments without feeling silly, something that does not often happen in the facility.

Fifty-eight percent of the men reported completing the Storybook Dads Programme two or more times. All believed it was worth doing a second or even a third time. The range of experience, skills, and abilities among the men participating for the second or third time allowed for peer-based learning with the role of the teacher changing depending on expertise.

When asked about whether there had been any change to how they took part the second or third time, all participants said yes. They reported being more confident, more relaxed, more prepared, and more knowledgeable about what they were doing. Some explained that they went more in depth, put in more learning, or just made something different – one father made a diary for his child the second time so that the child could express their feelings.

## Concerns regarding Storybook Dads

Four (21%) of the men expressed 'concern' about the programme<sup>130</sup> for various reasons. These included fear that the book and DVD would not reach their child due to issues with the child's caregiver or concerns about how they appeared on camera.

One said he had no concerns with the programme itself but then commented as follows:

- *"...um, and these people come in here and put in their whole heart and everything into it and... and then we've got these guys here that ain't really too fussed or bothered about it, you know. We look forward to that day, every day, every week, you know. That was our outing and we got down here and... and we got to think about our children and we were all in a whole group of all doing things for our children – we were laughing and joking and all of that, and the environment was great, um, and just let down, you know. Like you say, you know, we couldn't use the photocopier sometimes, or there was always a little hassle or something going on or... or sometimes we were late and we didn't get that full time in and, you know, just little things like that. But people that did the course – that facilitated the programme – they were marvellous; there was nothing wrong with the way they did things."*<sup>131</sup>

No primary caregivers and family/whānau or Department of Corrections staff expressed any concerns regarding the programme. However, a Mission staff member commented:

- *"...the concerns I have are around the funding contracting model. Like, um, Corrections rolls it over every year, and sometimes we don't hear until a couple of months into the next financial year or even longer and we've been running it for a while, so it seems to me there are some vulnerabilities around the programme that we deliver."*<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Mission 3

<sup>130</sup> Question 11 asked if the men had any 'concerns' about the programme.

<sup>131</sup> SBD participant 6

<sup>132</sup> Mission 3

## Limitations of the research

There are a number of limitations to this report. As the research team members were new to conducting research and writing research evaluations, we acknowledge there are some inconsistencies in how the data were gathered, analysed, and reported.

Unfortunately, it was difficult to measure the literacy progress as a result of Storybook Dads as eight of 20 prisoners participated in both the Storybook Dads programme and the Corrections literacy programme. We also lacked data to measure participant literacy progressions for three Storybook Dads participants. The enrolment of prisoners in both programmes meant it was difficult to distinguish those gains made as a result of the Storybook Dads programme and those resulting from the Corrections literacy programme.

When it came to comparing the literacy gains of prisoners who participated in both the Storybook Dads and the Corrections own literacy programme, we measured literacy gains at 20 hours, although the prison literacy programme runs for a total of 32 hours, which implies prisoners may have continued to develop their literacy over the course of the programme. Subsequent research needs to record information of the lasting effects of Storybook Dads on the prisoners' literacy development.

We were only able to gather a small number of primary caregiver and family/whānau participants. As these people are adults and care for the prisoners' children, they are more likely to have an understanding of how the book and DVDs may have impacted on the children's literacy. They are perhaps also in the best position to report on how the child's attitudes towards his/her father may have altered as a consequence of receiving the DVD and book. Future studies would benefit from the inclusion of a greater number of primary caregivers and family/whānau participants.

## Future directions/recommendations

The prisoner participants were asked how Storybook Dads could be improved and provided a range of suggestions:

- Having a family/whānau member present at the graduation ceremony that takes place at the completion of the programme (six participants)
- More resources available to help in the creation of books (six participants)
- More emphasis on cultural diversity in the programme, especially the inclusion of Pasifika cultures (two participants)
- More weekly sessions
- Sessions on how to come across on camera
- An increased focus on writing
- The inclusion of personal photographs and making CDs to which children could listen at bedtime.

Department of Corrections staff commented that including family/whānau visits would be a progressive, logical next step for the programme:

- *"Face to face, yeah. That would be an ambition of ours because we've embarked on a new era now. We're more prisoner-centred, so prisoners need the centre of our attention. But also the family are at the centre of our care, so we've got to start working with the family as well and we've been doing that for a long time, but more so now. So we're going to be innovative in our thinking. If we can get families in here with the child – to actually sit with the child and read, and video."*<sup>133</sup>

Mission and Department of Corrections staff considered that improvements could be made to emphasise the creative writing elements of the programme. Other suggestions from Mission staff included graduate programmes to further enhance participant literacy levels and companion programmes in the community for the whānau whose 'Dads' are completing the Storybook Dads programme.

This report highlights how prisoners, their children, and family/whānau members benefit from the Storybook Dads programme, in terms of bettering their relationships. Prisoners increase their literacy skills, which in turn bolsters their self-esteem and their ability to participate in society where reading and writing are necessary to

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<sup>133</sup> Corrections 1

achieve employment and therefore reduce the chances of reoffending. As such we suggest the programme should be adapted and incorporated into other sites such as women's prisons and other correctional facilities.

Methodist Mission staff reported that more definitive funding needs to be in place for the programme. Additional funding would also allow for variations in the programme, targeting specific cultural groups, such as Pasifika prisoners.

Post-release programmes that continue to build on the literacy developments of prisoners in community centres are another possibility. Such programmes could also include social workers who could work with prisoners on their re-integration into society. This would benefit the prisoner, their family/whānau, and the community as a whole. Tutors in this programme could also provide advice on such things as parenting, employment, writing a curriculum vitae, and so forth, all of which are necessary for prisoners' reintroduction to society.

It would also be advantageous to conduct research comparing the Storybook Dads programme with similar literacy programmes delivered at other New Zealand sites such as those being run by the Howard League. This would provide an overview of the benefits and drawbacks of each programme, which could be used to format a literacy programme that provides maximum improvement in prisoners' literacy acquisition, personal development, and relationship development.

The recommendations are:

1. The development and adaptation of other programmes that are able to:
  - a. use the idea of improving whānau relationships as a fundamental element
  - b. contain activities that include the participant's children either in person or by distance, e.g. children and whānau visits for story selection and reading, or shared story writing
2. The development of variations and extensions to the programme, such as:
  - d. programme expansion to other sites (e.g. women's prisons)
  - e. a Pasifika programme
  - f. drama-focused programmes where the men write their own scripts that could potentially even include a performance to which children and whānau are invited
3. Establishment of an adequate, appropriate, long-term funding model for the programme.
4. Further research into the following areas:
  - f. How and why the prison environment produces literacy gains above levels suggested in other research?
  - g. Post-release investigations of the programme participants in order to examine:
    - i. long-term literacy gains
    - ii. rates of re-offending
    - iii. relationship maintenance with children, whānau, and others
  - h. The child's literacy development after receiving the DVD and book made by their father
  - i. Comparison between Storybook Dads programme delivered at the Otago Corrections Facility with variations delivered at other sites
  - j. Comparison of literacy scores between prisoners who participated only in the Department of Corrections literacy programme and prisoners who participated both in that programme and in Storybook Dads to establish and examine thoroughly the cause of the identified literacy gains

## Final thoughts

### SBD participant

*"Yeah, nah, straight from the first day from the first day, I was, like, wow this is cool, and then... and then when I left they said 'See you back here next week. .... I... [asked]... 'Can we take our books home so we can do some research and that at home and we might get an idea in our head so we can do some during the week?' And they said, 'No we'll... we'll, um, we'll, um, all your stuff will have to stay back here and you just participate weekly'.... So I pre-do it in my cell – the ideas from my head – so I know when I got back to the the course I knew where I was gonna go. You know? I knew exactly where I was gonna start where I left off. You know, yea. And it all come together. Yeah, sort of yeah, had to manage it your time, I s'pose. And what they... what they, um, what they did give us for like tools for it, um, stickers, stamps, um, all sorts of things, you know, their glue and all that... and all this... all this glitter and that, you know, was it was amazing you can... you can actually do. You know? Um. Coming from an a... an adult's point of view, a man's point of view, you know how you could sit there with a glue stick and pictures of the kids, animals and stuff you know it's all good, brings ya... you know, you're away from the... from the... everything that's going on in the wing. And that what it's another reason why I like the course, 'coz you know it touches me in my heart to be able to do that for my... for my daughter.*

*....All that gang stuff was out the door, you know....So it, um, and we, um, you know, sort of binded us together in a way.... Yea, you're all grown men, you know, there's some boys in there but, just, yea, you know... yea, you can... teaches you about other people too, you know, what they're like, and. You know you're not so tough. Yeah, yeah, I... I liked it, eh."*<sup>134</sup>

### Primary caregiver, family/whānau

*"Dads are just not valued, they're not valued in the CYFs system, if Mum wants to do something, it'll happen: I mean Mum has the biggest say by far in lots of this stuff. And the Dads are often forgotten. The kids are taken into care and nobody thinks about Dad as long as Mum can do the visit, and these guys hurt like hang. There's a sense of taking it quite seriously, that they, they draw the brokenness they are living in and all the things that have happened to them. I often get the feeling that those children are what they are living for."*<sup>135</sup>

### Primary caregiver, family/whānau

*"I think the other thing is a lot of our dads can't read and write properly, and that the nice thing about it is it shows this guy can, and he's reading. Ok, it's a very simple story, and he's sung nursery rhymes and stuff which are very simple – but he's gone to a lot of effort to actually make something special for her and that will never... it will never be lost, I think. Whatever his capabilities are to live in the big wide world, there's all this other stuff, reading stories to kids. I mean that's one of the things the Dads like to think of as their thing. How else do you do the Dad thing? I mean it's – I think when children are a bit older it probably is a wee bit easier to talk to them and to do things, but I think it was very appropriate age wise, to what he was doing, it's very much where she was at, the book was absolutely spot on."*<sup>136</sup>

### Mission staff

*"They keep a close eye on what each other are doing with their books, and they are always interested in what they've got up to on their DVDs? 'Did you do such and such? Oh, did you sing a song! Oh, I want to sing a song too', you know? So they're interested in each other and I think they feel respect for doing well in the programme. Which is good because it's probably quite a different thing to what they normally get, probably they usually get respect for doing badly in prison. In this case they get respect for doing well, for completing it."*<sup>137</sup>

### Department of Corrections staff

*"The part that I see – and it ...and it jumps out at you every day – and it's this: prisoners coming back showing you what they've achieved, showing you what they've done, and show more interest in their children and how they want to be better fathers towards their children and things like this. And also having the change in the way*

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<sup>134</sup> SBD participant 8

<sup>135</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 6

<sup>136</sup> Primary caregiver, family/whānau 6

<sup>137</sup> Mission 1

*they think on when they get out and changing their – they're changing their mind from, 'Oh yeah, I'll be back' to 'Nah I might not be back,' you know? Or 'I definitely won't be back' you know what I mean?"<sup>138</sup>*

**Department of Corrections staff**

*"Well I think it's a really good rehabilitative and re-integrative programme because it encapsulates two benefits: one is re-engaging the prisoner with family or whānau. But also giving the prisoner the ability to express himself socially, because sometimes prisoners come into this environment they become closed; they don't reveal much of their emotions. And just talking to Joanne (name changed to protect confidentiality) the other day, there was some really good testimonies from some prisoner who you would never have thought would be able to open up themselves and reveal their true inner emotions. So in that respect I think it deals with two things: the social ability of a prisoner and re-integration of the prisoner – reforms and rekindles that relationship with his family, particularly his kids." <sup>139</sup>*

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<sup>138</sup> Corrections 4

<sup>139</sup> Corrections 1

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# Appendices

## Appendix One – Participant questions (Prisoner)

### Storybook Dads Programme Evaluation Prisoner questions



#### Programme

1. How did you get involved in the Storybook Dads programme?
2. What did you expect from it?
3. Was it what you expected? Yes / No
4. If it was different, in what way?
5. How many times have you taken part in Storybook Dads?
  - a) Once
  - b) Twice
  - c) Three or more
6. If only once, why?
7. If more than once:
  - Why did you do it again?
  - Was it worth doing it again? Yes / No
    - Why / why not?
  - Was there any change in how you took part the next time/s? Yes / No
  - If so what was it?
  - Did that make it better or worse? Yes / No
    - Why?
8. What parts of the programme do you think work well?
9. What parts of the programme do you think could be improved?
10. What has Storybook Dads done to your reading and writing?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why do you say that?
11. Do you have any concerns about the programme? Yes / No
  - If so, what?
12. Is there anything you would do differently if you did Storybook Dads again? Yes / No
  - If so, what?
13. Who do you think gains most from Storybook Dads?
  - Why?
14. Would you recommend the Storybook Dads programme to others? Yes / No
  - Why?
15. Have you taken part in the Kaupapa Māori programme? Yes / No
  - If yes, what did you think of that versus the other one?

*As you know, Storybook Dads is not only for you but your child/children and others. Now we would like to talk about how Storybook Dads might have been for them.*

#### Relationships

16. What do you think the child you sent the DVD and books to thinks of them?
  - a) Doesn't like them at all
  - b) Doesn't like them
  - c) Not sure, don't know

- d) Likes them
  - e) Loves them
  - Why do you think that?
17. What do you think the person your child lives with thinks of them?
- a) Doesn't like them at all
  - b) Doesn't like them
  - c) Not sure, don't know
  - d) Likes them
  - e) Loves them
  - Why do you think that?
18. What do you think other people think of them?
- a) Doesn't like them at all
  - b) Doesn't like them
  - c) Not sure, don't know
  - d) Likes them
  - e) Loves them
  - Why do you think that?
19. What has Storybook Dads done to your child's reading and writing?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why do you think that?
20. Which of the following best describes your relationship with your child as a result of Storybook Dads?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
21. Which of the following best describes your relationship with your child's mother as a result of Storybook Dads?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
22. Which of the following best describes your relationship with other members of your family/whānau as a result of Storybook Dads?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
23. Which of the following best describes your relationship with any others as a result of Storybook Dads?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?

*Now we would like to talk about how Storybook Dads in general.*

**Overall**

24. Is there anything else you want to say about Storybook Dads?

## Appendix Two – Participant questions (Primary caregiver, family/whānau)

### **Storybook Dads Programme Evaluation** **Primary Caregiver and Family/whānau questions**



1. How many DVDs and books have been sent to the child/children?
  - a) One
  - b) Two
  - c) Three or more
2. Did you know a DVD and book were being sent to the child/children? Yes / No
3. What do they think of them?
  - a) Don't like them at all
  - b) Don't like them
  - c) Not sure, don't know
  - d) Like them
  - e) Love them
  - Why?
4. Did the child know a DVD and book was being sent to them? Yes / No
5. What do you think the child/children think/s of them?
  - a) Doesn't like them at all
  - b) Doesn't like them
  - c) Not sure, don't know
  - d) Likes them
  - e) Loves them
  - Why?
6. How often does the child watch the DVD or read the book?
  - a) Never
  - b) Hardly ever
  - c) Sometimes
  - d) Quite a bit
  - e) Lots
7. Did anyone else know a DVD and book was being sent to them? Yes / No
8. What do you think they think of them?
  - a) Doesn't like them at all
  - b) Doesn't like them
  - c) Not sure, don't know
  - d) Likes them
  - e) Loves them
  - Why do you think that is?
9. If more than one has been sent
  - Was it worth getting it again? Yes / No
  - Why / why not?
10. What has Storybook Dads done to the child's reading and writing?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why do you say that?

*Getting something like the DVD and book can change how people get on. We would now to talk about that.*

### **Relationships**

11. Which of the following best describes your relationship with the child's father as a result of Storybook Dads?

- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
12. Which of the following best describes the child's relationship with their father as a result of Storybook Dads?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
13. Which of the following best describes other members of your family/whānau with the child's father as a result of Storybook Dads?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
14. Which of the following best describes with anyone else's relationship with the child's father as a result of Storybook Dads?
- a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
15. What was the level of contact before the DVD and book arrived?
- a) A lot
  - b) Some
  - c) None
  - Why was that?
16. What kind of contact was that?
- a) Visits
  - b) Telephone calls
  - c) Letters
  - d) More than one of the above
17. What was the level of contact after the DVD and book arrived?
- a) A lot
  - b) Some
  - c) None
  - Why was that?
18. What kind of contact is that?
- a) Visits
  - b) Telephone calls
  - c) Letters
  - d) More than one of the above

*Now we would like to talk about how Storybook Dads in general.*

### **Over all**

19. What parts of the programme do you think work well?
20. What parts of the programme do you think could be improved?
21. Do you have any concerns about the programme? Yes / No
- If so, what?
22. Is there anything you would want done differently if the child's father did Storybook Dads again? Yes / No

- If so, what?
23. Who do you think gains most from Storybook Dads?
- Why?
24. Would you recommend the Storybook Dads programme to others? Yes / No
- Why?
25. Has the child's father taken part in the Kaupapa Māori programme? Yes / No
- If yes, what did you think of that versus the other one?
26. Is there anything else you want to say about Storybook Dads?



## Appendix Three – Participant questions (Child who received DVD and book)

### Storybook Dads Programme Evaluation Child who received DVD and book questions



1. How many DVDs and books have been sent to you?
  - a. One
  - b. Two
  - c. Three or more
2. Did you know you were getting them? Yes / No
3. What do they think of them?
  - a. Don't like them at all
  - b. Don't like them
  - c. Not sure, don't know
  - d. Like them
  - e. Love them
  - Why?
4. How often do you watch the DVD or read the book?
  - a. Never
  - b. Hardly ever
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Quite a bit
  - e. Lots
5. If more than one has been sent
  - Was it worth getting it again? Yes / No
  - Why / why not?
6. What has Storybook Dads done to your reading and writing?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why do you say that?

*Getting something like the DVD and book can change how people get on. We would now to talk about that.*

### Relationships

7. Which of the following best describes how you get on with your Dad as a result of getting the DVD and book?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?

*Now we would like to talk about how Storybook Dads in general.*

### Over all

8. What things do you like most about Storybook Dads?
9. What things do you like the least about Storybook Dads?
10. Is there anything you would want done differently if your Dad did Storybook Dads again? Yes / No
  - If so, what?
11. Do you think other people should do Storybook Dads? Yes / No

- Why?

12. Is there anything else you want to say about Storybook Dads?

## Appendix Four - Participant questions (Corrections and other programme staff)

### **Storybook Dads Programme Evaluation** **Corrections and other programme staff questions**



1. What is your role at Otago Corrections Facility?
2. Do you have any knowledge of the Storybook Dads programme? Yes/No
  - If no then can stop.
3. If yes, what do you know about the programme?
4. What has Storybook Dads done to the reading and writing of the men that have taken part?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why do you say that?
5. Which of the following best describes your relationship with men as a result of Storybook Dads?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
6. Which of the following best describes with anyone else's relationship with the men as a result of Storybook Dads?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
7. If you noticed change was this short lived or longer term?
  - Why do you think that may have happened?
8. What parts of the programme do you think work well?
9. What parts of the programme that could be improved?
10. Do you have any concerns about the programme? Yes / No
  - If so, what?
11. Who do you think gains most from Storybook Dads?
  - Why?
12. Would you recommend the Storybook Dads programme? Yes / No
  - Why?
13. Is there anything else you want to say about Storybook Dads programme?

## Appendix Five - Participant questions (Corrections and other programme staff)

### Storybook Dads Programme Evaluation Storybook Dads delivery staff questions



1. What is your role in Storybook Dads?
2. What do you expect from it?
3. What has Storybook Dads done to the reading and writing of the men that have taken part?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why do you say that?
4. What parts of the programme do you think work well?
5. What parts of the programme that could be improved?
6. Do you have any concerns about the programme? Yes / No
  - If so, what?
7. Which of the following best describes your relationship with men as a result of Storybook Dads?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
8. Which of the following best describes with anyone else's relationship with the men as a result of Storybook Dads?
  - a) Made it much worse
  - b) Made it worse
  - c) No change, don't know
  - d) Made it better
  - e) Made it much better
  - Why?
9. Have you taken part in the Kaupapa Māori programme? Yes / No
  - If yes, what did you think of that versus the other one?
10. Who do you think gains most from Storybook Dads?
  - Why?
11. Would you recommend the Storybook Dads programme? Yes / No
  - Why?
12. Is there anything else you want to say about Storybook Dads programme?